プライド
1
Pride
一条ゆかり
Ichijo Yukari
QUEEN'S COMICS

PRIDE 1

Yukari Ichijo

CHORUS
コーラス
QUEEN'S COMICS
クイーンズ コミックス

PRIDE 1

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PRIDE
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HOW MANY LOVERS CAN YOU GET?
194

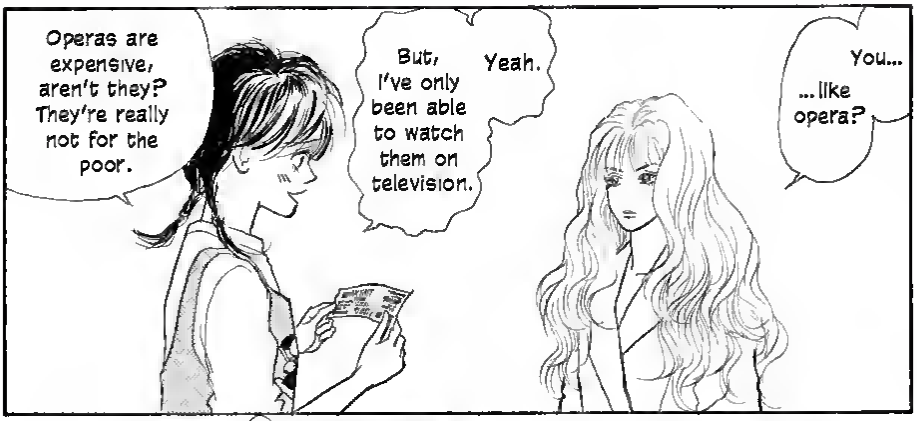
I KNEW THAT THE WORLD ECONOMY WAS IN RECESSION ...
...AND THAT FATHER'S COMPANY WAS UNDER-GOING RAPID DOWN-SIZING.
BUT, I NEVER IMAGINED THINGS WOULD END UP LIKE THIS.
Good afternoon! We are from BC Cleaning Services!

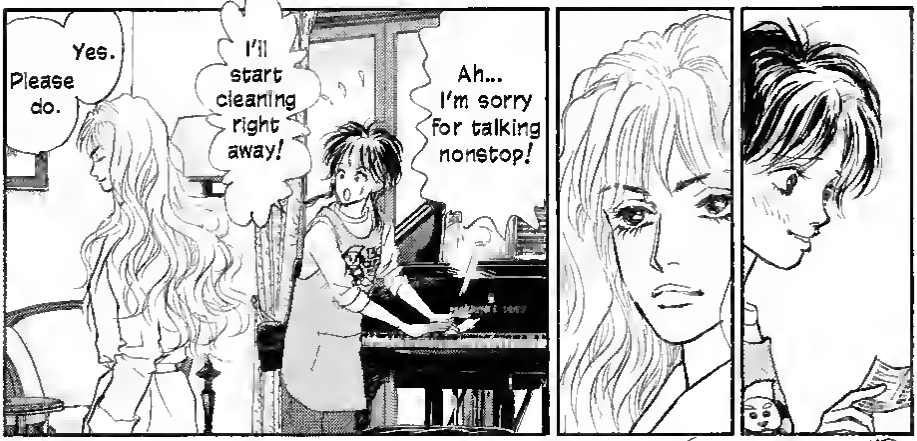
プライド
Pride
1

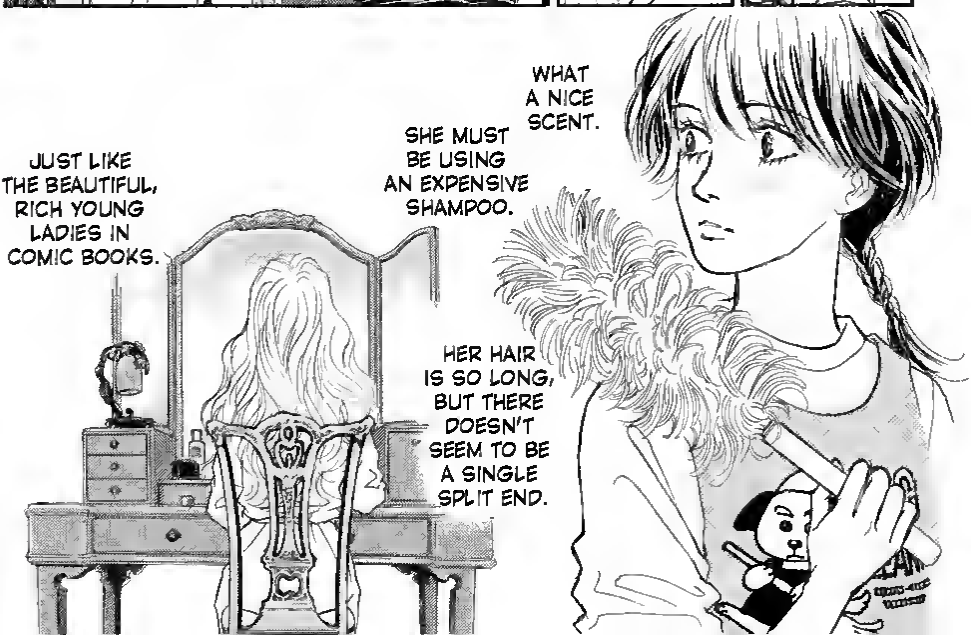
We are here to do the monthly cleaning.
Ah, yes. Thank you for coming.
It's been difficult having to clean the house all by myself.
Thankfully, only the owner and his daughter live here... so it hasn't been *too* bad.
Are you new?
Yes. I'm at your service. Pleased to meet you.
KA-CHAK
WIPE
Excuse me. May I come in?
I am from BC Cleaning Services.

Are you a pianist?
Amazing... You have a grand piano in your own room!
Wow!
A student with a grand piano? That's awesome!
No, I'm studying voice. It's for my voice training.
You're going, right?! So lucky!
A single ticket costs upwards of $650, so I can't afford it.
AHHH!
It's a ticket to *La traviata*!
BC CLEANING

PRIDE 1

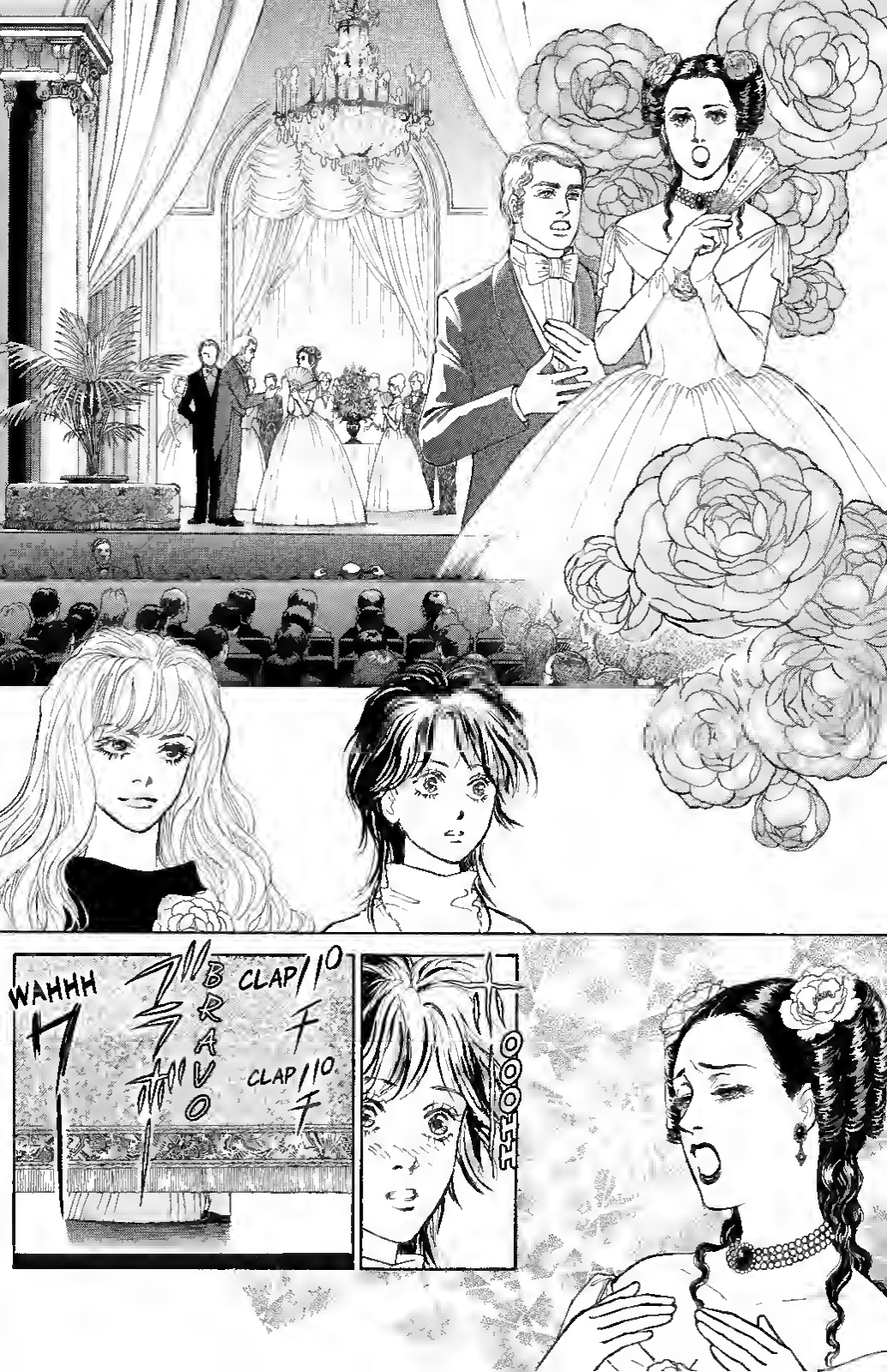

Operas are expensive, aren't they? They're really not for the poor.
But, I've only been able to watch them on television.
Yeah.
You... ...like opera?


Yes. Please do.
I'll start cleaning right away!
Ah... I'm sorry for talking nonstop!

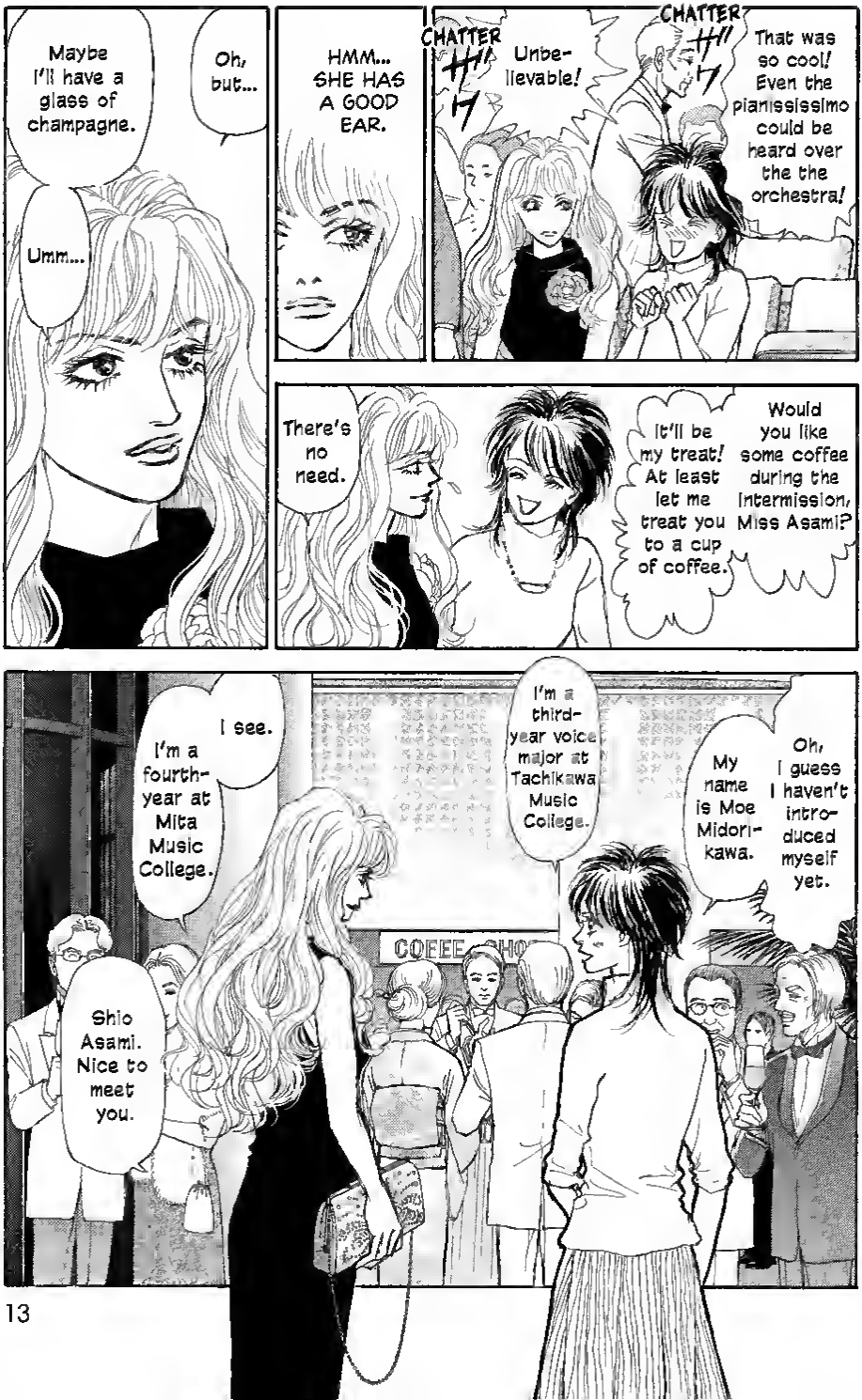

JUST LIKE THE BEAUTIFUL, RICH YOUNG LADIES IN COMIC BOOKS.
SHE MUST BE USING AN EXPENSIVE SHAMPOO.
WHAT A NICE SCENT.
HER HAIR IS SO LONG, BUT THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A SINGLE SPLIT END.

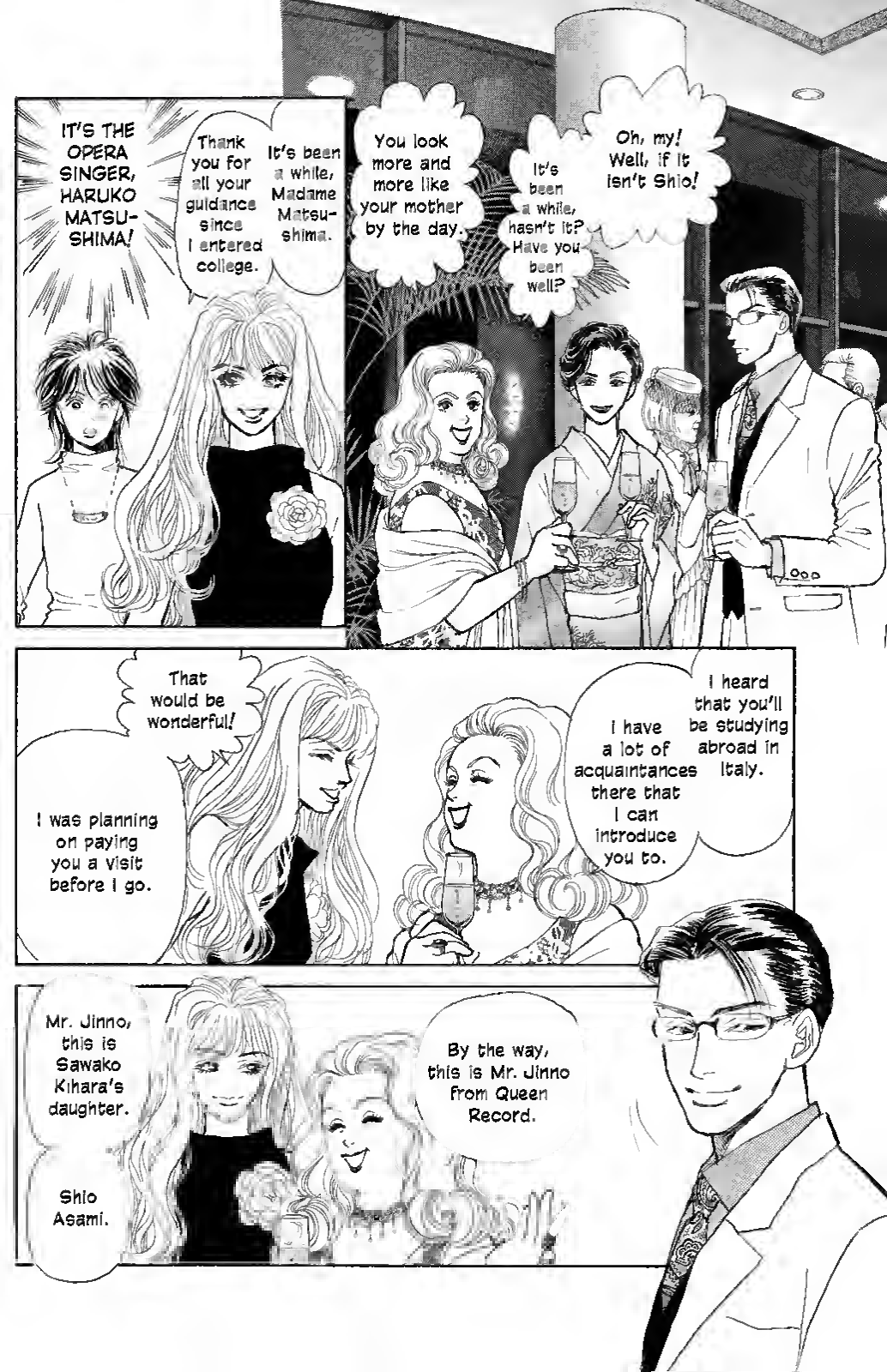
Excuse me.
Yes, you.
VRRRM
VRRRM
I know ...
Yes, yes ...
What? You can't make it?
But, you were the one who wanted to go.
Yes, Father.
Really, now.
It wasn't my intention to sell it to you.
BC CLEANING
PFT ISN'T
I have an extra ticket.
It's a bit sudden, but it's for today's perform-ance at 6:30.
But... isn't it really expensive?
Rather than let it go to waste, it's better to give it to someone who wants to go.
Please take it.
HUH?!
I can't afford a $650 ticket!
This month's tight enough as it is.

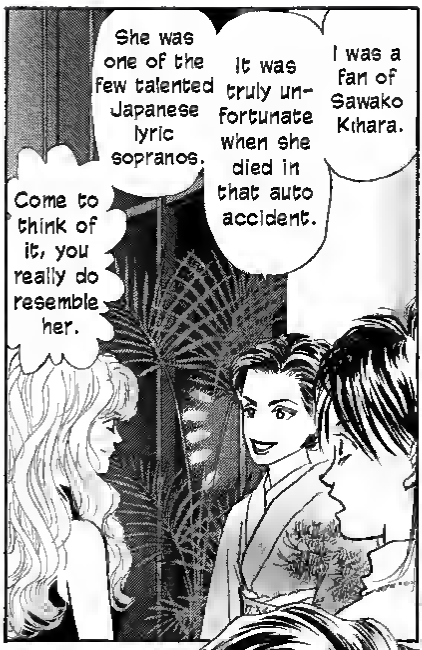
I only asked you since it seemed like you wanted to go.
Throwing it away or giving it away makes no difference to me.
It doesn't matter if it's expensive or cheap. I don't need it anymore.
IRRITATED イラッ
I'll take it.


WAHHH
BRAVO
BRAVO
CLAP
CLAP
OOOH

PRIDE 1


Maybe I'll have a glass of champagne.
Oh, but...
Umm...
HMM... SHE HAS A GOOD EAR.
CHATTER
Unbelievable!
CHATTER
That was so cool! Even the pianississimo could be heard over the the orchestra!
There's no need.
It'll be my treat! At least let me treat you to a cup of coffee.
Would you like some coffee during the intermission, Miss Asami?
I see.
I'm a fourth-year at Mita Music College.
Shio Asami. Nice to meet you.
I'm a third-year voice major at Tachikawa Music College.
My name is Moe Midorikawa.
Oh, I guess I haven't introduced myself yet.


IT'S THE OPERA SINGER, HARUKO MATSUSHIMA!
Thank you for all your guidance since I entered college.
It's been a while, Madame Matsushima.
You look more and more like your mother by the day.
It's been a while, hasn't it? Have you been well?
Oh, my! Well, if it isn't Shio!
I heard that you'll be studying abroad in Italy.
I have a lot of acquaintances there that I can introduce you to.
That would be wonderful!
I was planning on paying you a visit before I go.
By the way, this is Mr. Jinno from Queen Record.
Mr. Jinno, this is Sawako Kihara's daughter.
Shio Asami.


I was a fan of Sawako Kihara.
It was truly unfortunate when she died in that auto accident.
She was one of the few talented Japanese lyric sopranos.
Come to think of it, you really do resemble her.

Oh?

I am Natsuko by the way. It's a pleasure to meet you.
I also used to sing a little in the past.
But now I run a place in Ginza called *Prima Donna*.

SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL...
It's rare for a man of your age to frequent my club, Mr. Jinno.
Are you calling me an old man?
Even considering you're the vice president of Queen Record.
It's a *club* that youngsters like you shouldn't go to.
Well, well.
What sort of place?
You certainly do resemble her. Except for your eyes...
Sawako Kihara's eyes were gentler.

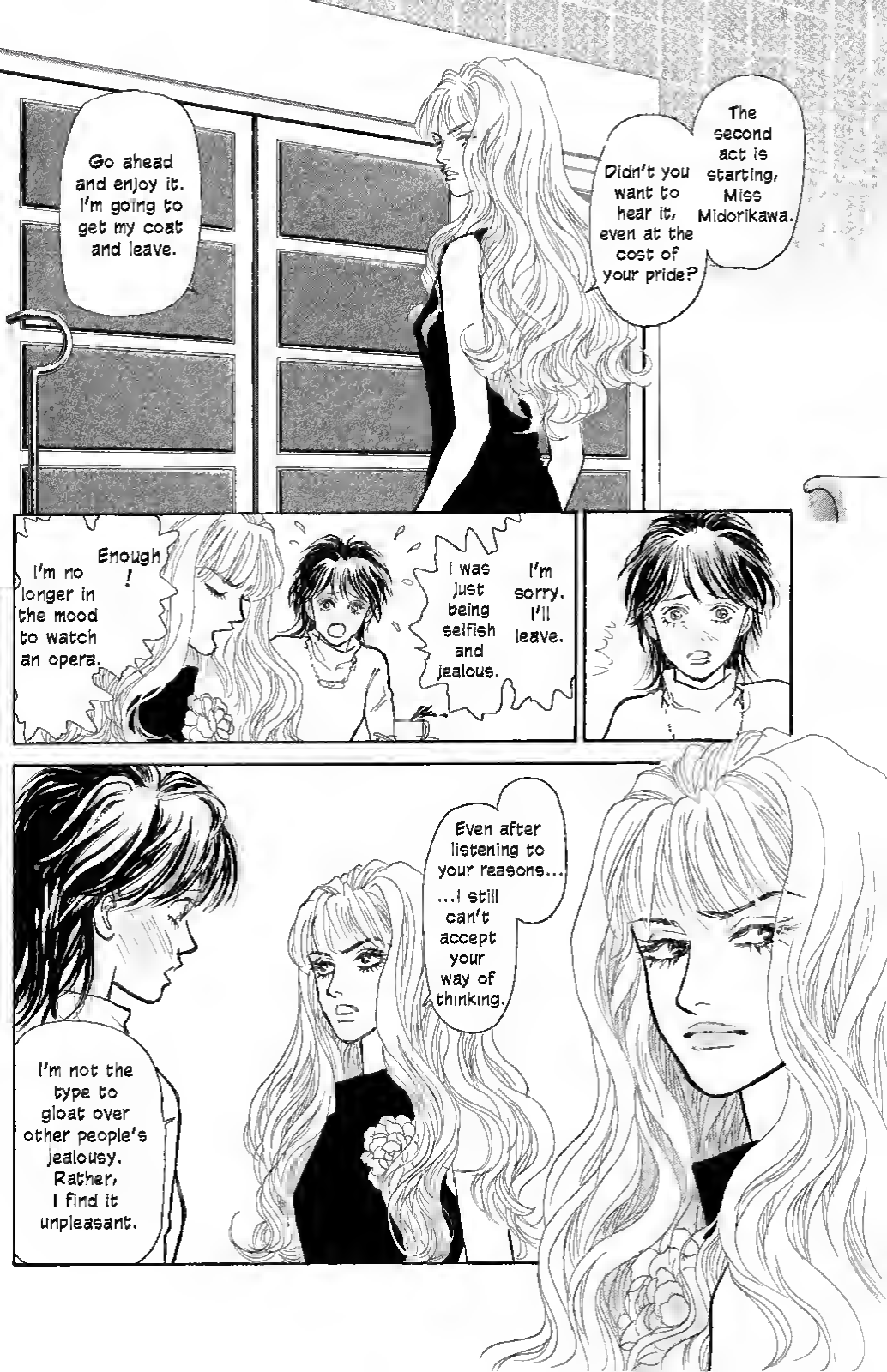
PRIDE 1

It's been a while since I've had the desire to scout someone.
What a pity.
They're full of strength and spirit.
Well, I think your eyes are remarkable.
Oh, dear! Look at the time!
I'm afraid I have to go, Shio. Please do pay me a visit.
Ah, yes. Good luck to you too, dear.
Ah, yes. Tachikawa.
That place is quite ...
Oh... Yes...
What?
Your friend?
Here, Miss Asami ...
Your champagne.
It's always been my dream to sing on the world stage like you, Madame Matsushima!
I'm a voice major at Tachikawa Music College, Moe Midorikawa.
It's an honor to meet you!

Here, I'll take that.
Thank you.
You're so lucky, Miss Asami...
You have a grand piano in your room...
...and go to an expensive school like Mita Music College...
You're also the daughter of Sawako Kihara ...
You're a beautiful, rich woman with connections. You're so unfair!
Sorry...
...but I don't appreciate being called *unfair*.

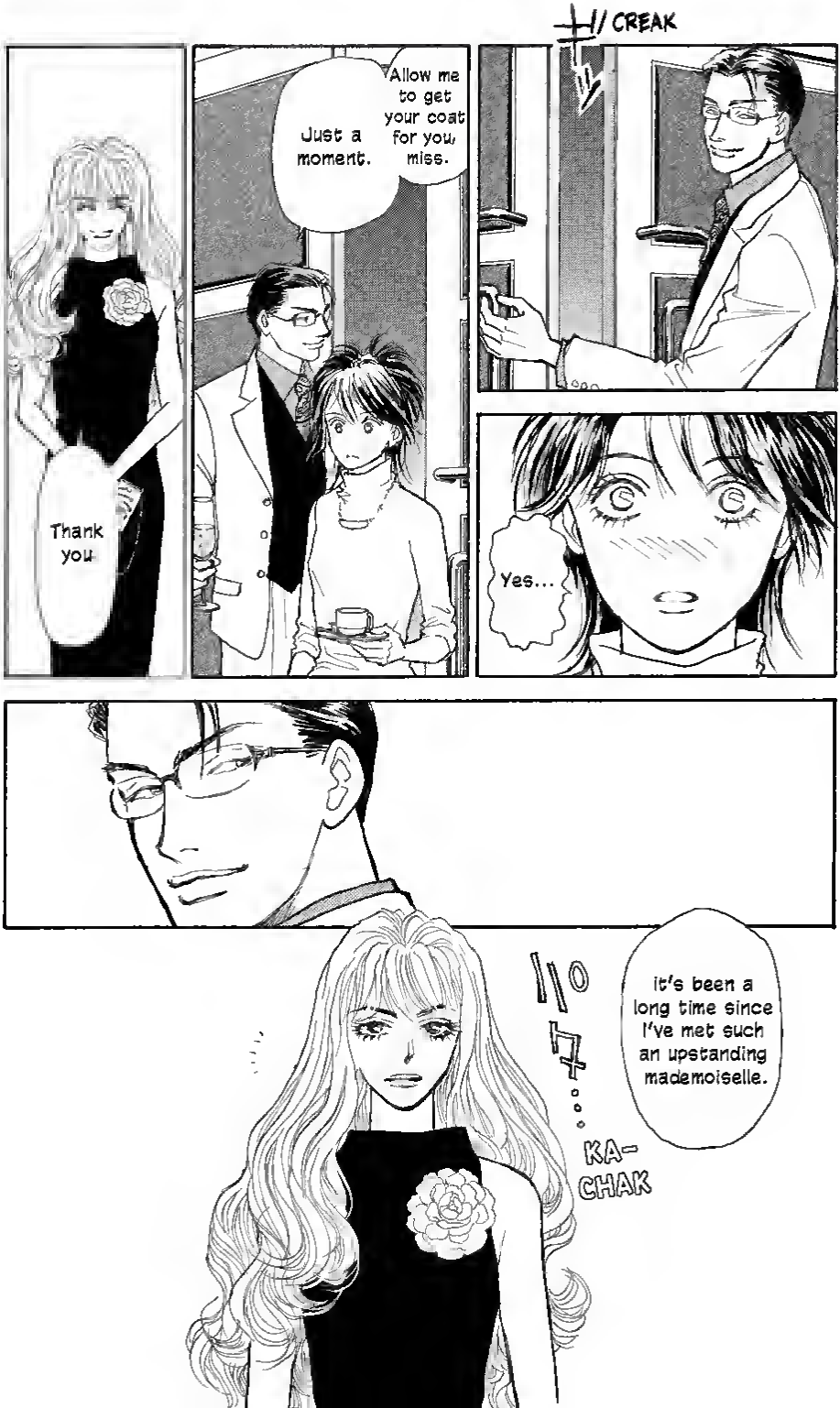
PRIDE 1

A ticket that you were going to throw away as trash!
SOB
That's right!
SOB
SIGH
How was I being unfair?
All I did was give you a spare ticket.
I'm just falsely accusing you...!
I know! I know I'm not making any sense!
I HATE THIS.
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I HEARD THE SAME THING?
We're both human, but why are we so different?!
But when I'm with you, I can't help feeling sorry for myself.


The second act is starting, Miss Midorikawa.
Didn't you want to hear it, even at the cost of your pride?
Go ahead and enjoy it. I'm going to get my coat and leave.
Enough!
I'm no longer in the mood to watch an opera.
I was just being selfish and jealous.
I'm sorry. I'll leave.
Even after listening to your reasons...
...I still can't accept your way of thinking.
I'm not the type to gloat over other people's jealousy. Rather, I find it unpleasant.

PRIDE 1

I'm sorry. Please.
May I pass through?
I wasn't sure if I should interrupt.
No matter what shameless tricks you have to play...
...you must seize every chance you get.
Let me tell you the secret to success.
And understand the ins and outs of being at the top.


CREAK
Allow me to get your coat for you, miss.
Just a moment.
Thank you
Yes...
it's been a long time since I've met such an upstanding mademoiselle.
KA-CHAK

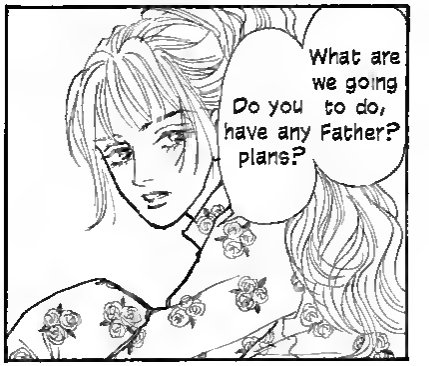
I hate it, my mom keeps comparing us!
Always telling me, Learn from Shio!
No fair! Only Shio's getting better and better!
I don't want to play the piano with you anymore, Shio!
You act so full of yourself with that I'm so rich attitude!
It hurts because I feel like I'm here just to help make you look better.
I'm really cute too, you know!

Because I'm blessed by the gods.
Because I'm rich...
Because I'm my mother's daughter...
These are the justifications I use to hurt others.
I look down on others ..
I'm uncooperative...
I have a nasty personality...
I'M FED UP WITH THEIR WAY OF THINKING.
VROOOM
Shi! Are you awake?!
We need to talk.

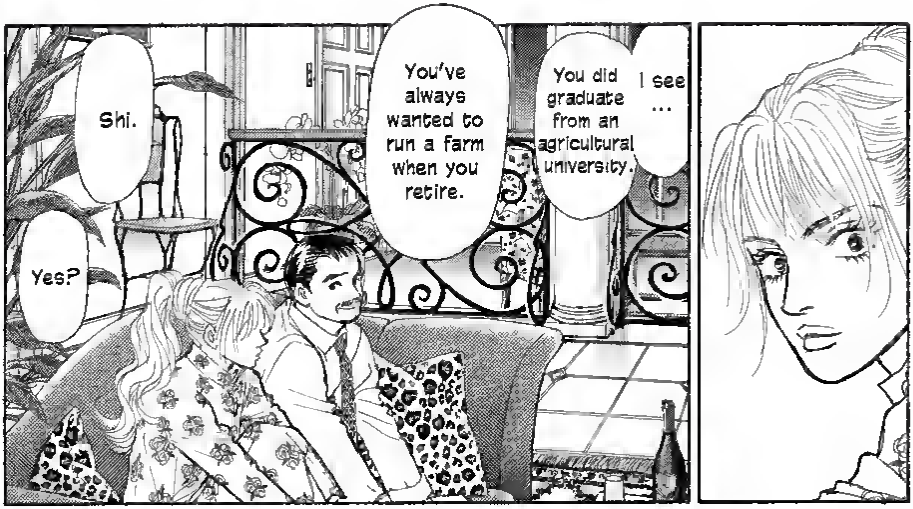
POP
BLUB
OK.
Cheers!
To our future.
?
To what?
I'm sorry, but the company has gone bankrupt!
GULP
GULP

SWIG
I really tried my best to hang in there.
I know.
But there's been fierce competition between the import agents.
I see.
And... I also mortgaged the house...
Oh...
.....

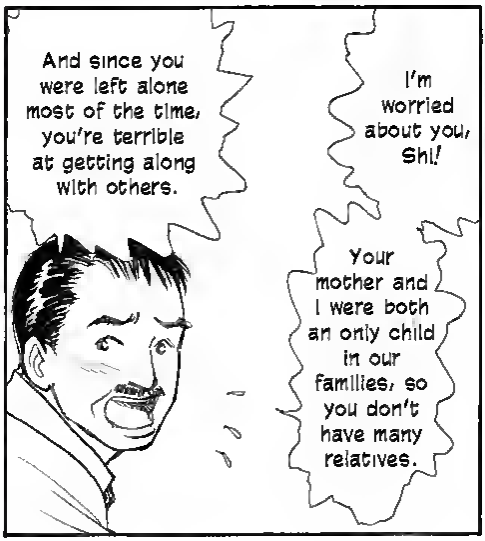
I don't know how I'm going to face your mother in Heaven.
...piano lessons, study abroad, and dowry is all gone. There's nothing left.
The money for your...

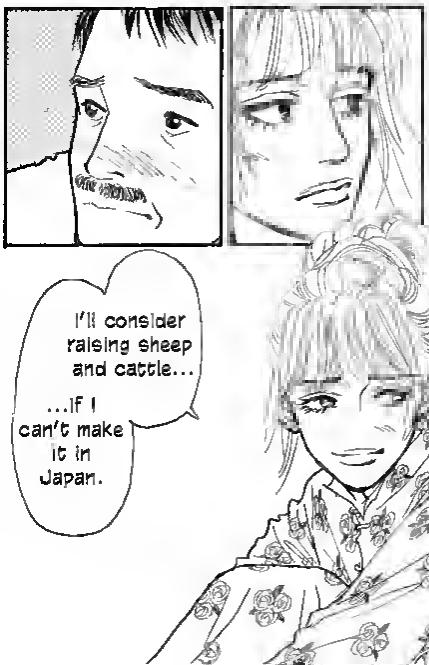

What are we going to do, Father? Do you have any plans?

He's a friend from when I lived in Hokkaido. He's a good man.
Well, you'll be graduating this year. A man by the name of Katagiri invited me to join him in running his farm in New Zealand.

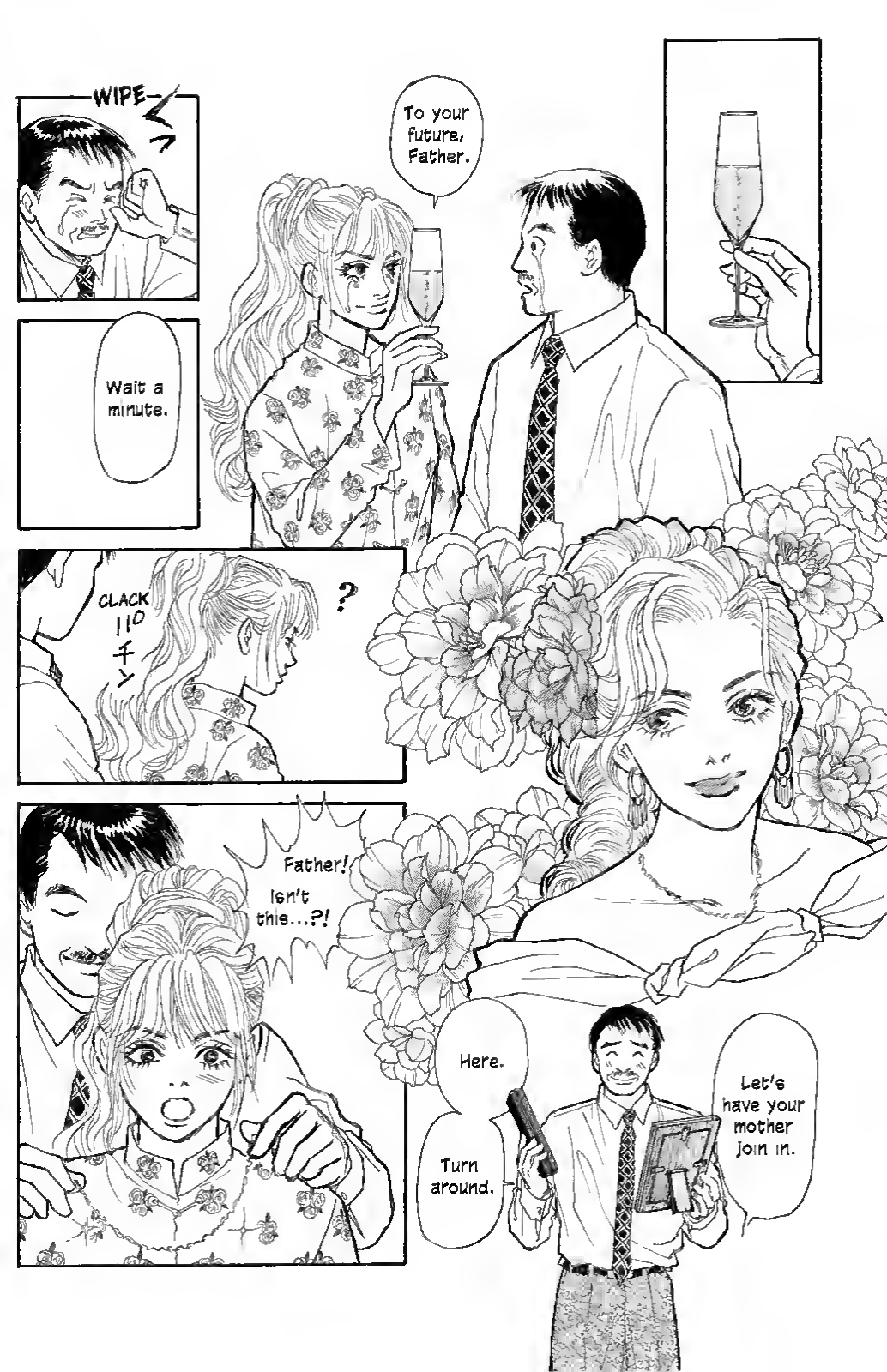

Shi.
Yes?
You've always wanted to run a farm when you retire.
You did graduate from an agricultural university.
I see ...

Would you... ... consider coming with me?


And since you were left alone most of the time, you're terrible at getting along with others.
I'm worried about you, Shi!
Your mother and I were both an only child in our families, so you don't have many relatives.


I'll consider raising sheep and cattle... ...if I can't make it in Japan.

You were never taught... ...the things that only a mother could teach.
You also didn't know how to behave like a spoiled child... ...or make childish demands.
Because you were such a good child, I never had to worry about you. As a father, I should have paid more attention.
I'm sorry.
You... ...are a good father.
You don't treat me like a child... ...and you respect my decisions.
You're a father that I'm proud to have.

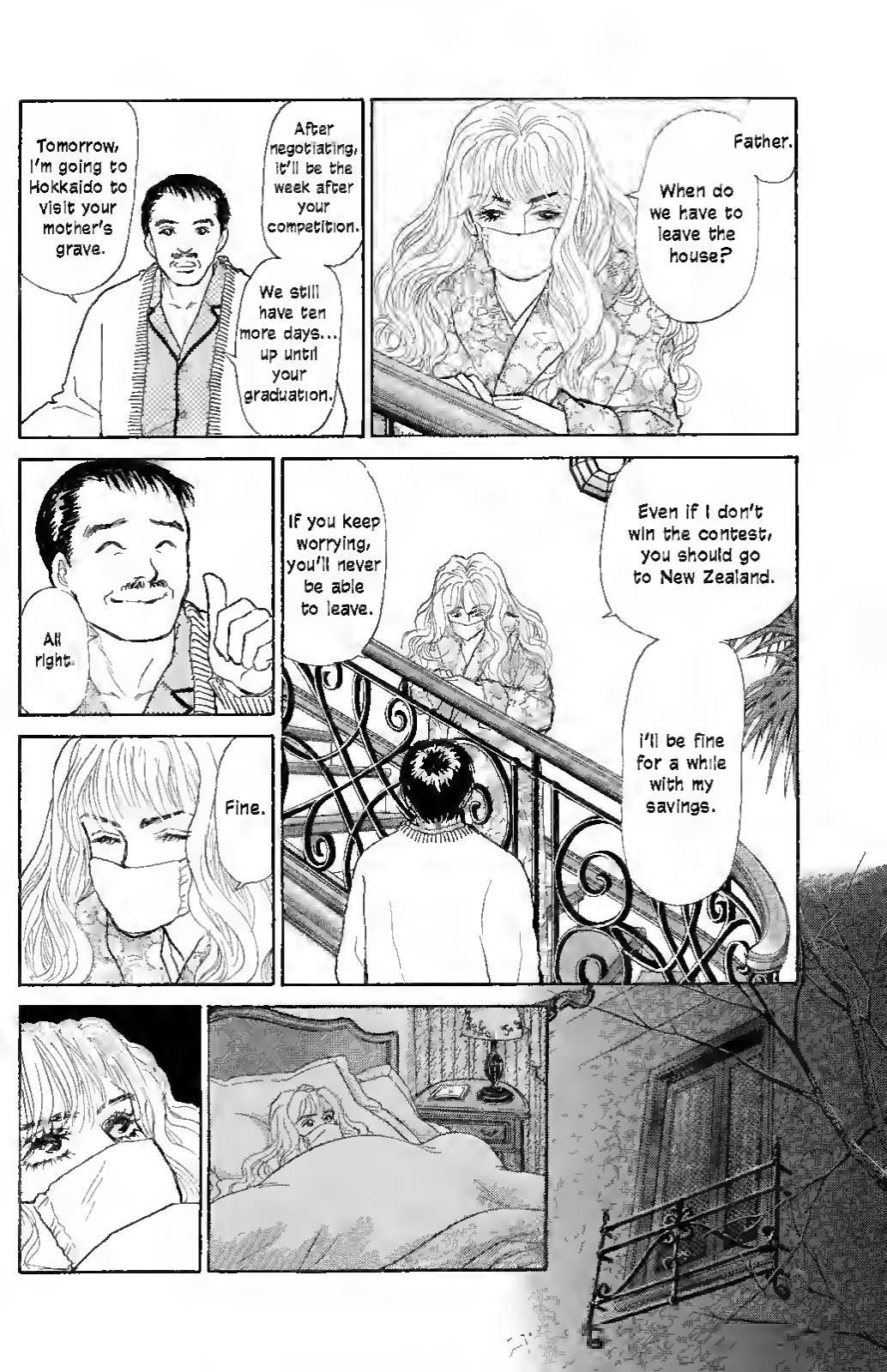

WIPE
To your future, Father.
Wait a minute.
CLACK
ﾁﾝ
?
Father! Isn't this...?!
Here.
Turn around.
Let's have your mother join in.

PRIDE 1

It's not very valuable, but your mother always wore it. It's a necklace full of love and happiness.
This is the necklace I gave to your mother when I proposed to her on the Ponte Vecchio.
I planned to give this to you on your wedding day.
May your mother always watch over you.
CLENCH
Cheers!

Such a shame. Your Italian was very good, Miss Asami.
I think you would have reached great heights within two to three years.
YAMAMO
OFFIC
三田音楽大学
MITA MUSIC COLLEGE
SINCE 1948
You have a beauty that few Japanese people possess.
If only there was someone who could sponsor you.
I've already made my decision.
I came here to discuss what I should do after I graduate.
That's right! You could enter the March competition!
The application deadline has passed, but I'll pull some strings!
AH!
Hmm... It's already February. There's not much time
You didn't take any teaching courses, so...

...the grand prize is an opportunity to study abroad in Italy!
PARCO DE
SEEKING NEWCOMER CONTESTANTS
PRELIMINARY ROUND
AUDIO TAPE
SCREENING
LOCATION PARCO HALL MARCH 1ST
Anyone can participate. I didn't recommend this to you since I thought you didn't need it, but...
It's this one! Parco de Opera is a competition to promote opera in Japan.
WHOAAA おおっとぉ
Hey! You actually think you're on the same level as her?!
No way! Even if we have the same skill level, the beauty always gets the advantage!
Hey, have you heard?
Shio Asami's participating in Parco de Opera!
What?! Isn't she set to go study abroad?
Stop joking around! I'm also in it! I even bought my dress!
Dryness is the throat's worst enemy.
You even wear a mask to sleep, Shi?
Good night.
ポコ BLUB
ポコ BLUB

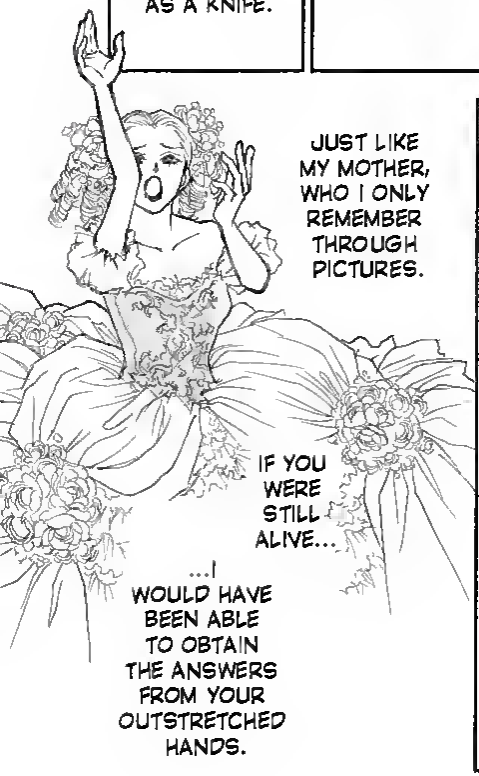

Tomorrow, I'm going to Hokkaido to visit your mother's grave.
After negotiating, it'll be the week after your competition.
We still have ten more days... up until your graduation.
Father.
When do we have to leave the house?
All right.
If you keep worrying, you'll never be able to leave.
Even if I don't win the contest, you should go to New Zealand.
I'll be fine for a while with my savings.
Fine.

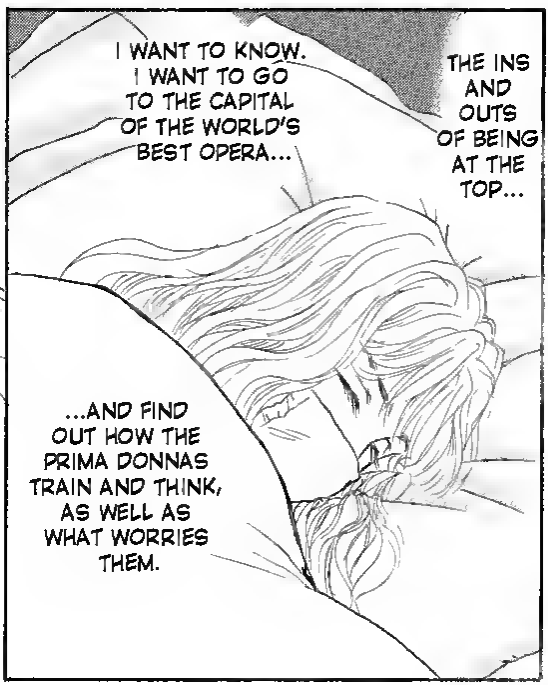
PRIDE 1

THAT MAN...
WAS IT, JINNO?
HE LEFT AN IMPRESSION AS SHARP AS A KNIFE.

...the ins and outs of being at the top.
And understand...
HIS WORDS WERE BURNED INTO MY MEMORY.

Let me tell you the secret to success.
No matter what shameless tricks you have to play...
...you must seize every chance you get.


JUST LIKE MY MOTHER, WHO I ONLY REMEMBER THROUGH PICTURES.
IF YOU WERE STILL ALIVE...
...I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN THE ANSWERS FROM YOUR OUTSTRETCHED HANDS.

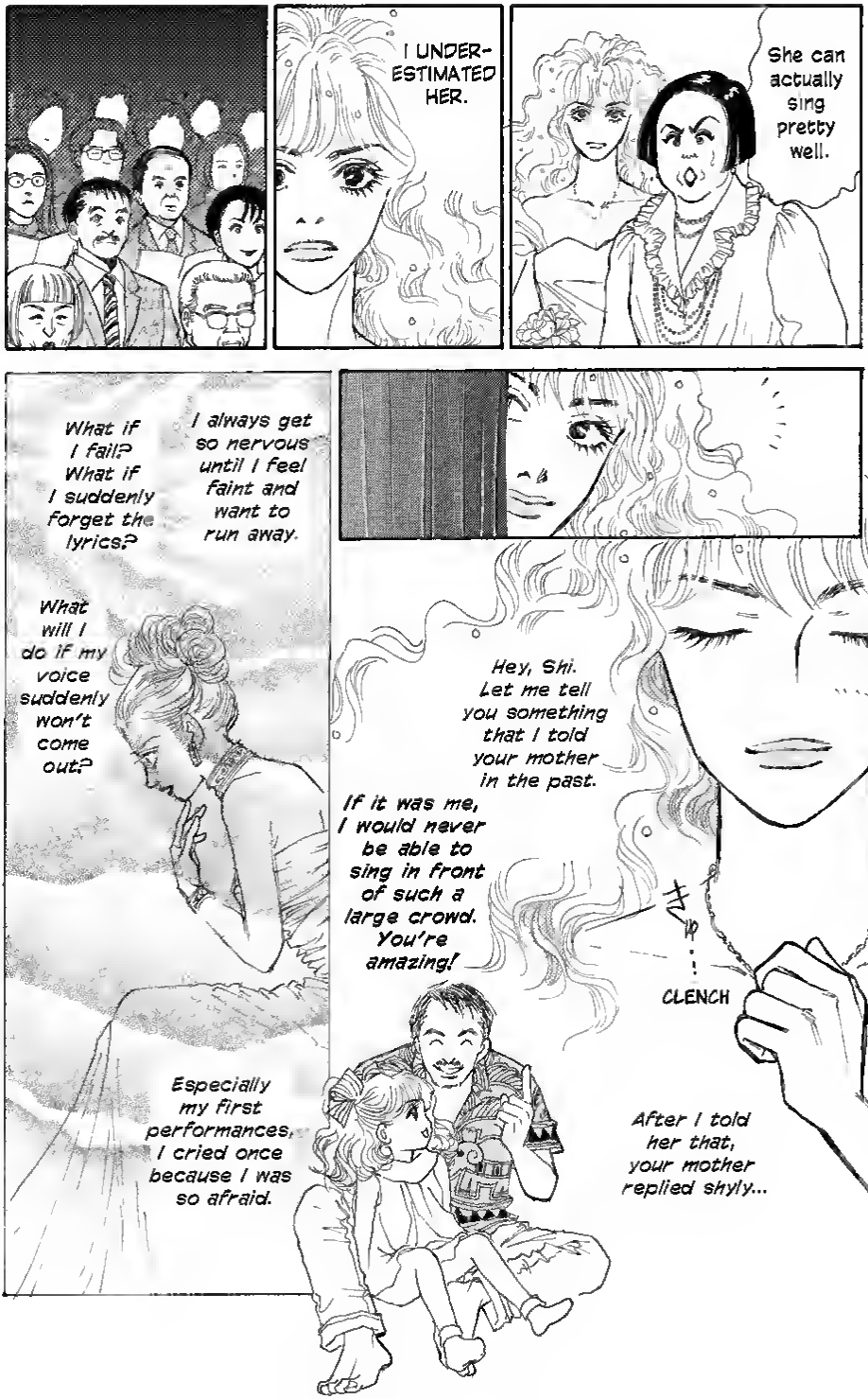

I WANT TO KNOW. I WANT TO GO TO THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD'S BEST OPERA...
THE INS AND OUTS OF BEING AT THE TOP...
...AND FIND OUT HOW THE PRIMA DONNAS TRAIN AND THINK, AS WELL AS WHAT WORRIES THEM.

In terms of rank, Mita is number one.
But, that still doesn't rule out the lesser known schools. You never know...
...if they'll turn out someone exceptional.
~30
OOM FOR
NTESTANTS
contestants may
cer. Please knock
before entering.
Odd-numbered participants, please use Rehearsal Room A
Even-numbered participants, please use Rehearsal Room B
Ten contestants will remain in the final round, but there's no need to worry.
The preliminary round was a cinch.
KA-CHAK
AH
AH
AH
AH

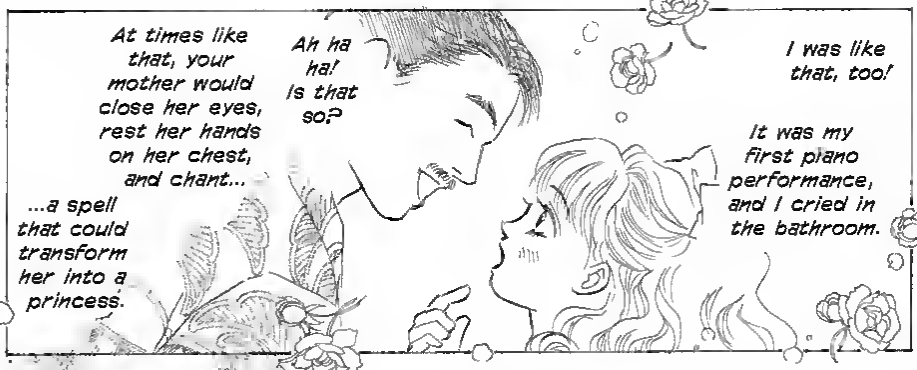
PROHIBITED SMOKING
Thanks to you, I was able to experience the best of the best.
It's been a while.
Thank you so much for that time...
I'm glad that the ticket didn't go to waste.
I joined to test my courage, but now I'm so nervous, I might forget my lyrics.
There are thirty contestants here, you know...
Miss Asami... you're up after me, right? I was surprised when I saw the performance order.
Ah! This one here is Yoshino's top student.
Oh! I know this boy, too.
Oh, *that* place. The facilities there are poor and their professors are unknown.
She's from Tachikawa.
We met briefly before.
Your friend?

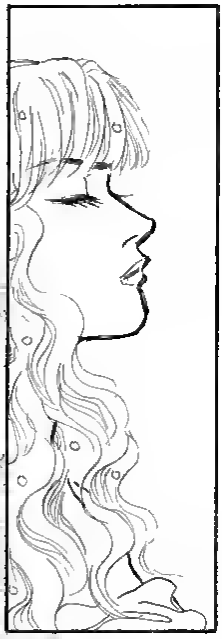
There can only be one winner! The first-place winner will take away a ticket to go study abroad in Italy!
From over five hundred applicants who applied from all over Japan, only thirty young contestants passed our strict preliminary round!
Guiding the young, future generation of Japan's opera world to the international stage... please enjoy Parco de Opera!
AHHHH!!
SPONSORED BY QUEEN RECORD
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
Grandpa Kinoshita is still alive? Can he even hear?
Hmm... And Queen Record's Takashi Jinno.
It looks like one of the judges is Matsushima.
SO THAT GUY...
...IS ONE OF THE JUDGES.
IT'S CUTE AND SUITS HER VERY WELL.
IT'S UNUSUAL TO SEE A SHORT DRESS IN A COMPETITION.
Contestant number 19... from Naniwa Music College, age 23... Noboru Fukukawa!
The piece he's going to perform will be Nessun Dorma from Turandot!
We need to watch out for number 3 and number 12.
CLAP
CLAP

Contestant number 29... from Tachikawa Music College, age 21... Moe Midorikawa!
The piece she's going to perform will be *Sì, mi chiamano Mimì* from *La bohème*!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
The dresses before were all gaudy.
What a cute dress.
Everyone's so high-spirited.
How lovely. Her voice is also quite good.
Number 29, huh.
YES
YES
My, my! Not bad!
That girl...


I UNDER-ESTIMATED HER.
She can actually sing pretty well.
What if I fail? What if I suddenly forget the lyrics?
I always get so nervous until I feel faint and want to run away.
What will I do if my voice suddenly won't come out?
Hey, Shi. Let me tell you something that I told your mother in the past.
If it was me, I would never be able to sing in front of such a large crowd. You're amazing!
CLENCH
Especially my first performances, I cried once because I was so afraid.
After I told her that, your mother replied shyly...

PRIDE 1


At times like that, your mother would close her eyes, rest her hands on her chest, and chant...
...a spell that could transform her into a princess.
Ah ha ha! Is that so?
I was like that, too!
It was my first piano performance, and I cried in the bathroom.



FOR NOW, FORGET EVERYTHING.

FORGET ABOUT FATHER'S COMPANY GONE BANKRUPT.

FORGET ABOUT HAVING TO LEAVE THE HOUSE THAT I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN.

I DON'T NEED REALITY.

I AM NO LONGER SHIO ASAMI.

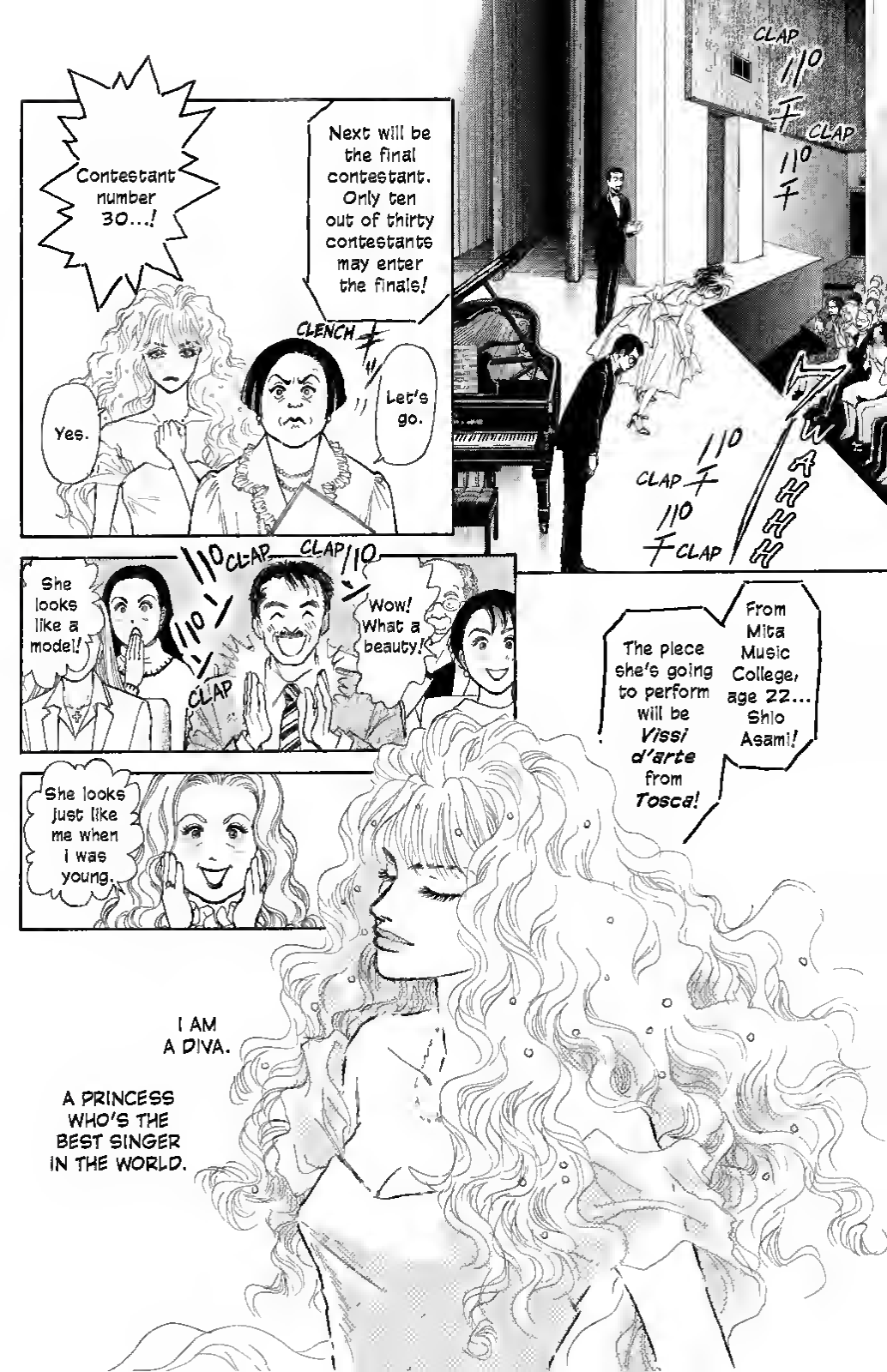
I am a diva.

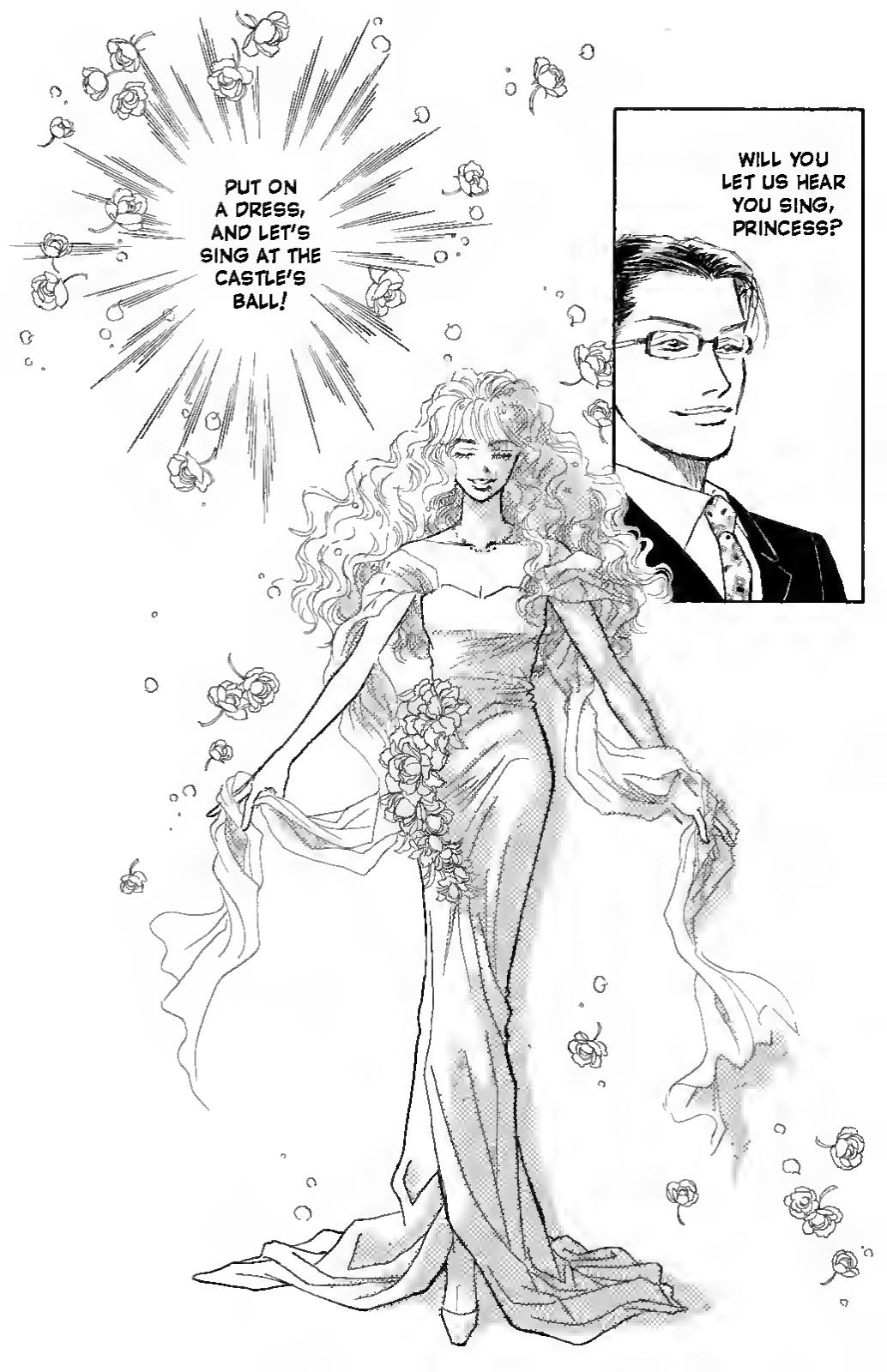
A princess who's the best singer in the world.

Angels have come to pick me up saying, ***Let's sing together!***

There is a ball today at the castle in the sky.

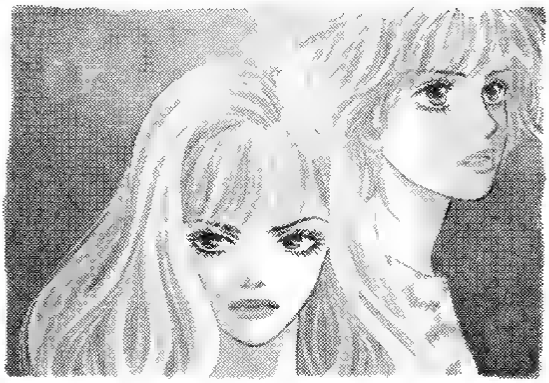
Put on a dress, and let's sing at the castle's ball!


Contestant number 30...!
Next will be the final contestant. Only ten out of thirty contestants may enter the finals!
CLENCH
Yes.
Let's go.
CLAP
110
CLAP
110
CLAP
110
CLAP
110
AHHH
She looks like a model!
Wow! What a beauty!
She looks just like me when I was young...
The piece she's going to perform will be *Vissi d'arte* from *Tosca*!
From Mita Music College, age 22... Shio Asami!
I AM A DIVA.
A PRINCESS WHO'S THE BEST SINGER IN THE WORLD.

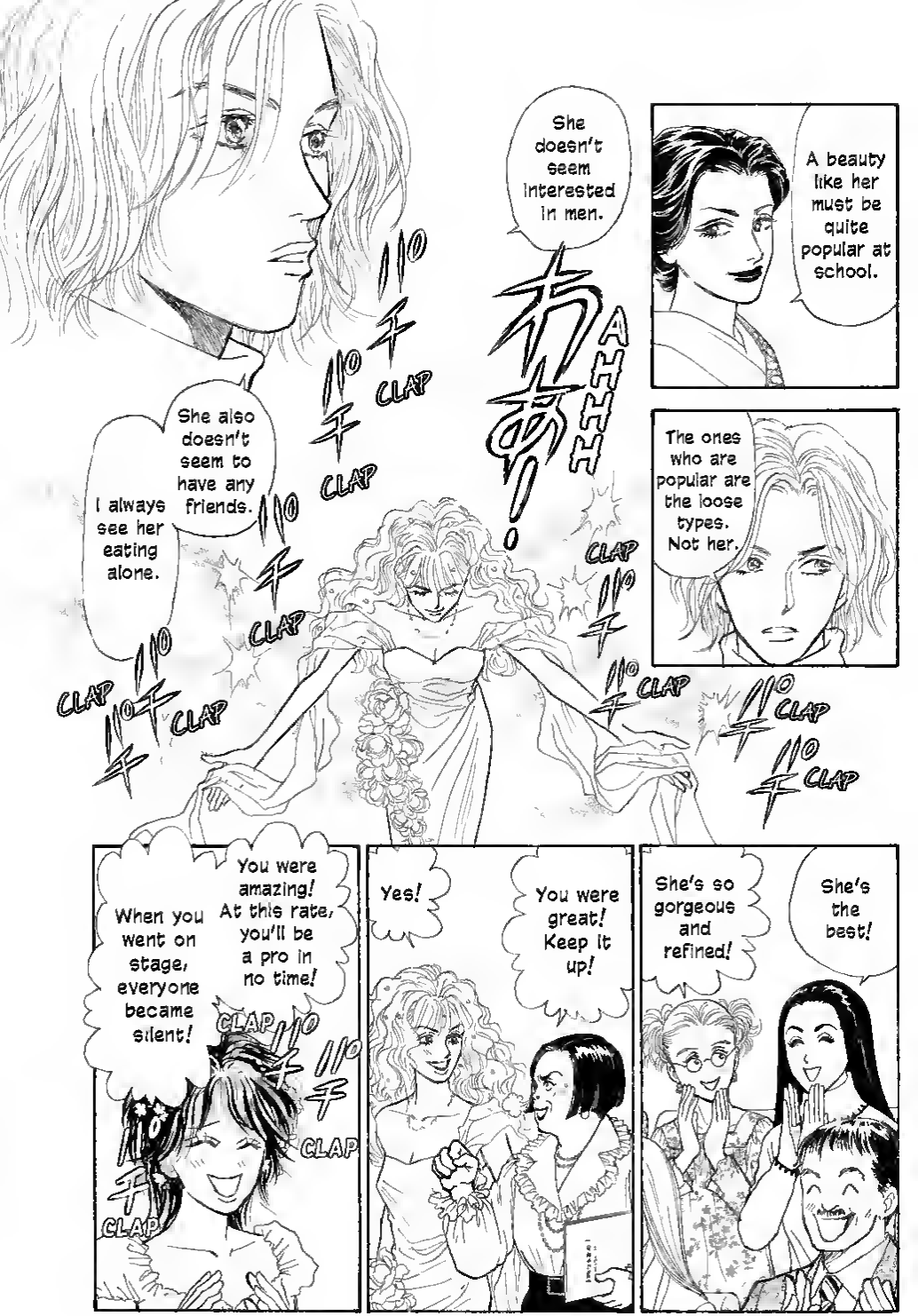

PUT ON A DRESS, AND LET'S SING AT THE CASTLE'S BALL!
WILL YOU LET US HEAR YOU SING, PRINCESS?

PRIDE 1

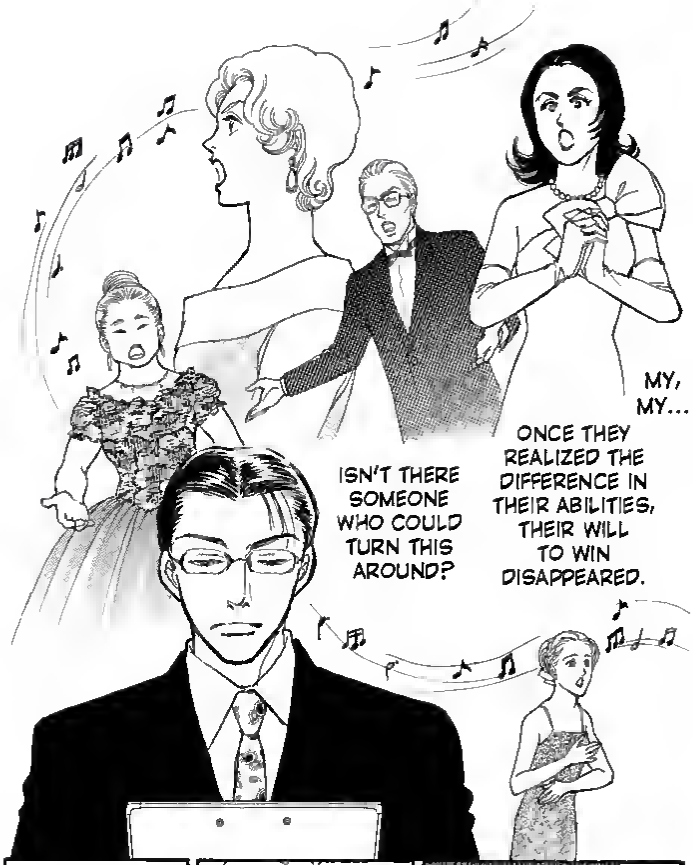
She's good!
As expected of Yamamoto's star pupil.
I heard that she's Sawako Kihara's daughter.
I see, I see. They have the same stage demeanor.
She possesses a strong foundation.
I agree.
That child has natural ability.
A PRINCESS AND MODEL STUDENT, HUH.

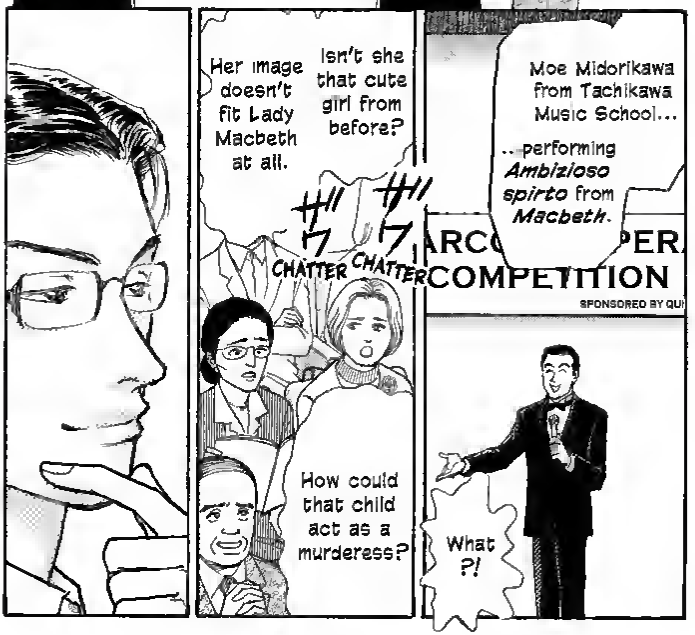


The way she sings is just like Sawako Kihara though.
They have a similar build and voice.
But, that girl's a mezzo-soprano.
Shio's a cool beauty with a future already laid out for her.
That's the old lady playing the piano.
She's Professor Yamamoto's prized student.
I only know her because she's famous.
I'm a piano major.
You also attend Mita Music College, right Ran? Do you know each other?


She doesn't seem interested in men.
A beauty like her must be quite popular at school.
She also doesn't seem to have any friends.
I always see her eating alone.
The ones who are popular are the loose types. Not her.
You were amazing! At this rate, you'll be a pro in no time!
When you went on stage, everyone became silent!
You were great! Keep it up!
Yes!
She's so gorgeous and refined!
She's the best!
CLAP
AHHH

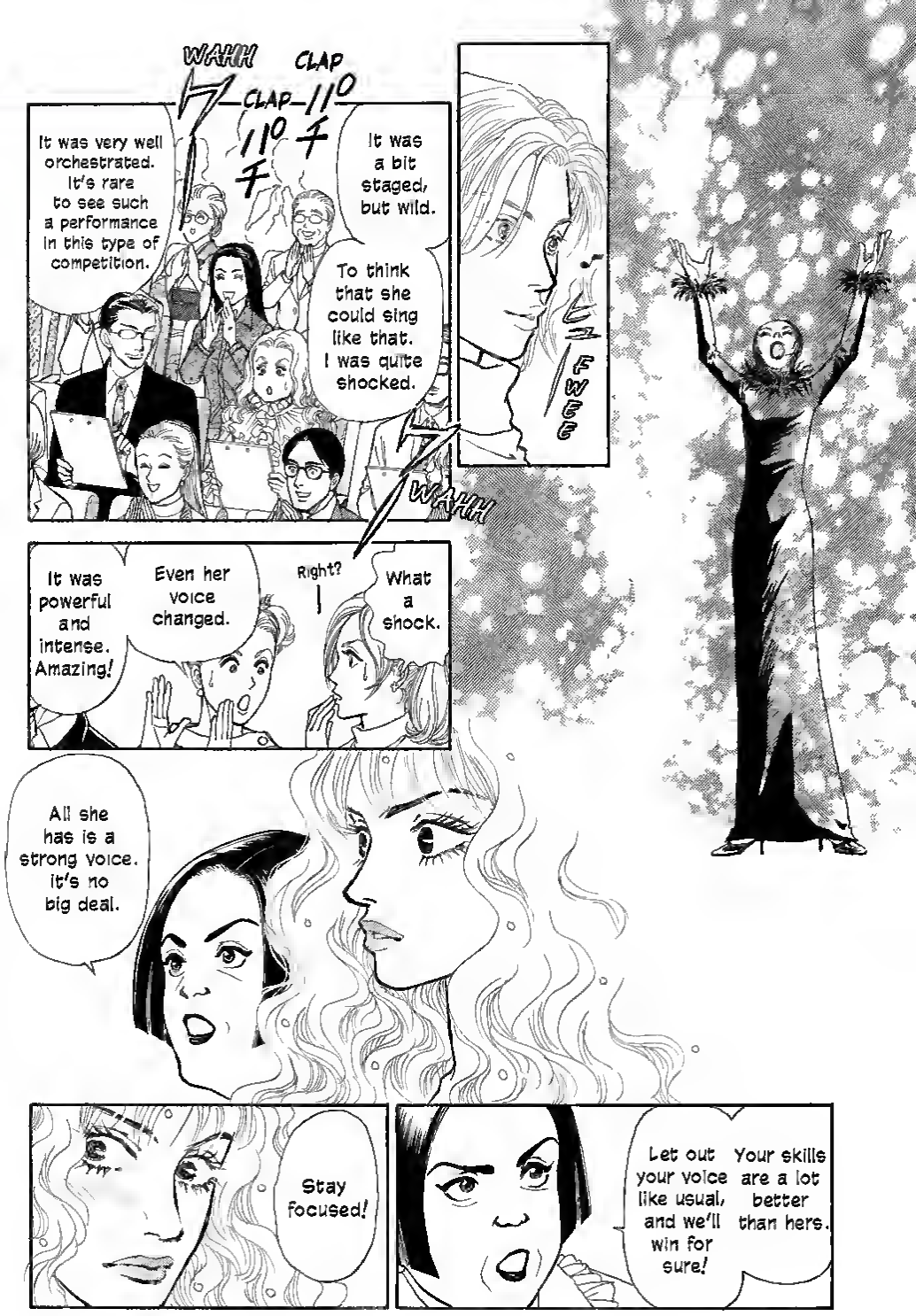
THAT'S RIGHT. LIKE THEM.
TO THEM, EVERYONE IS A RIVAL.
WITH THAT KIND OF CHARACTER, SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE PROFESSIONAL STAGE.
EVEN THOUGH SHE HAS A GOOD VOICE, SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE THE DESIRE TO WIN.
COMPLIMENTING A RIVAL...?
Thank you...
THE WINNER WILL DEFINITELY BE YOU!
KEEP IT UP!
YOU DID IT! YOU DID IT, SHI!
Now, then... Who will take home the ticket to their dreams? Next up is contestant number 3...
This marks the end of the round! We'll be asking the remaining ten contestants to perform a different song.
WAHHH
Have your ears gone dull, Mom? You drink too much.
Well, I guessed them all right.
I thought number 21 would be in.
What a shame. I guessed wrong.
No matter who we choose, the winner will probably be Shio Asami.
10TH PARCO

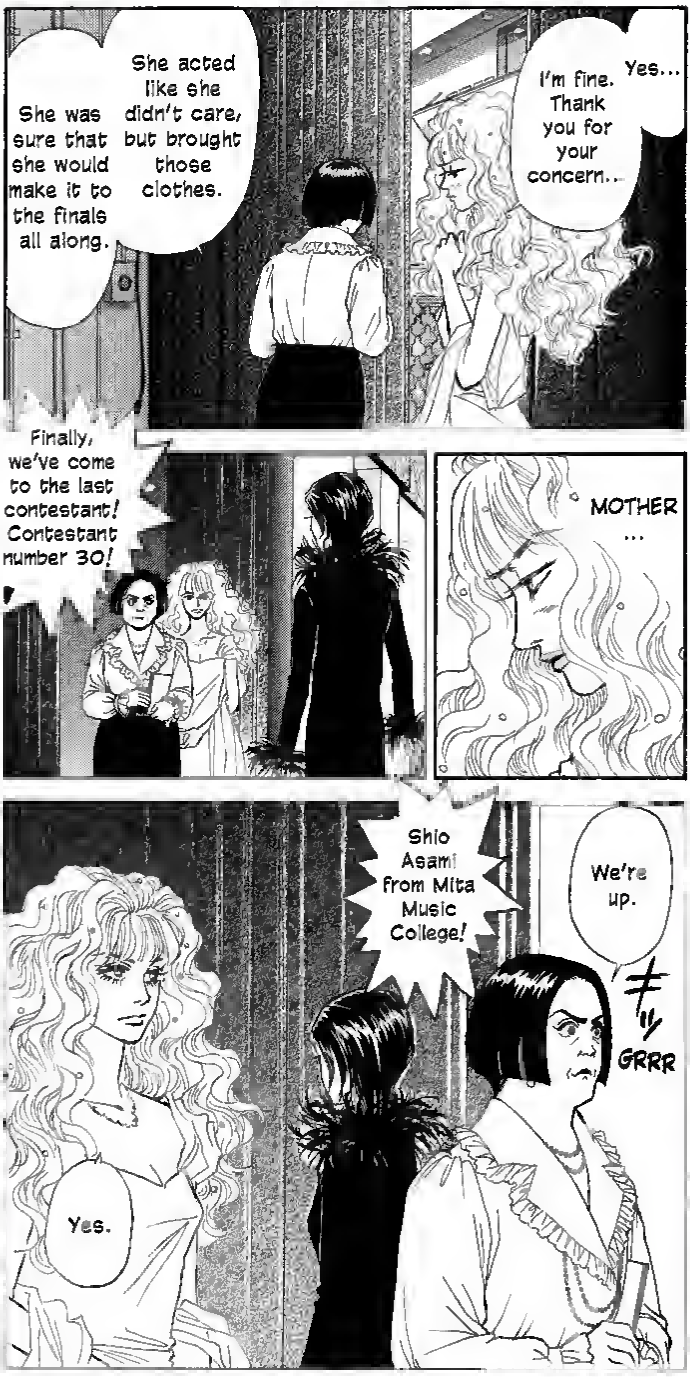

MY, MY...
ONCE THEY REALIZED THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR ABILITIES, THEIR WILL TO WIN DISAPPEARED.
ISN'T THERE SOMEONE WHO COULD TURN THIS AROUND?

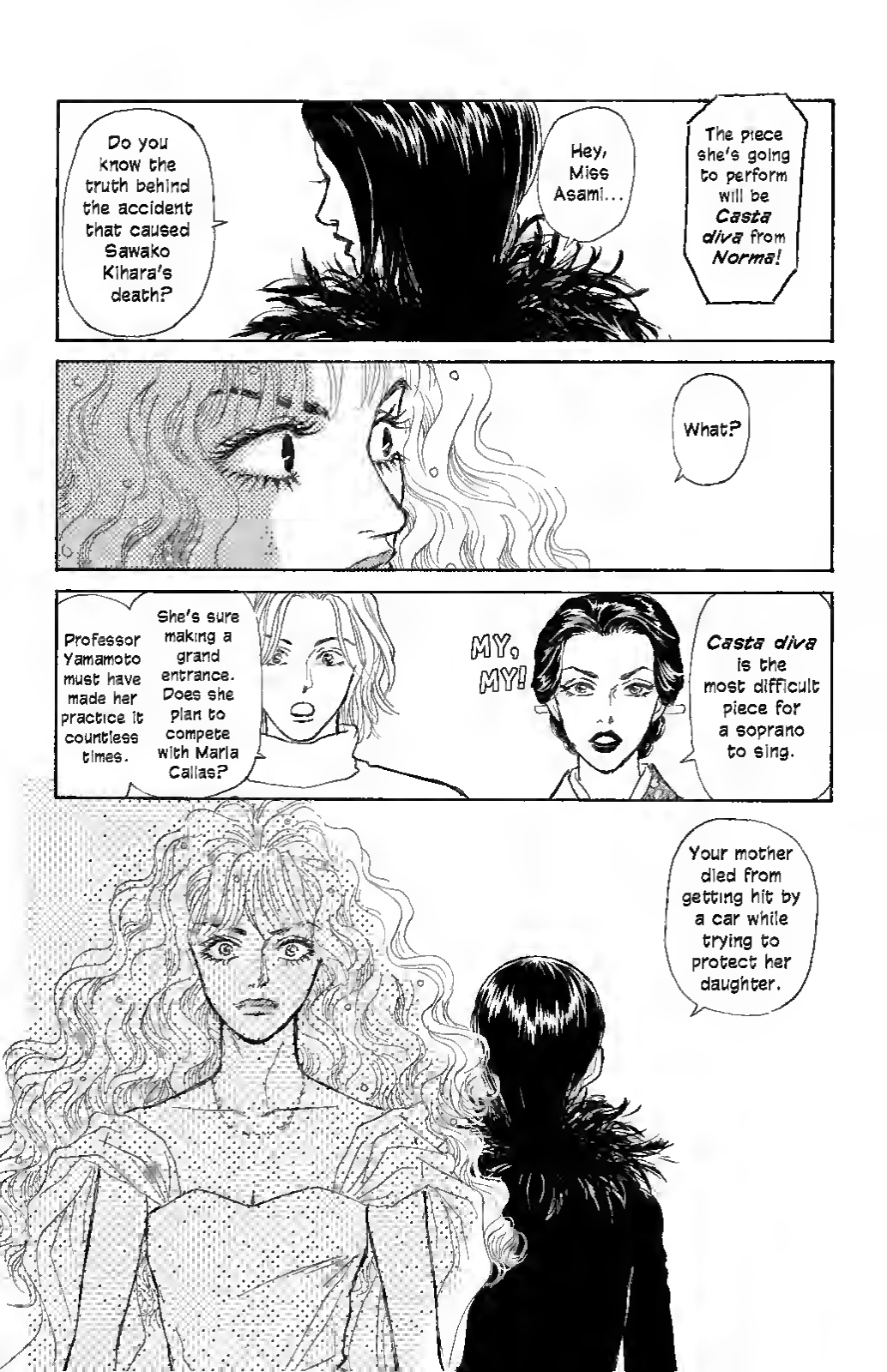

Her image doesn't fit Lady Macbeth at all.
Isn't she that cute girl from before?
Moe Midorikawa from Tachikawa Music School...
...performing *Ambizioso spirto* from *Macbeth*.
HII HII
CHATTER CHATTER
COMPETITION
How could that child act as a murderess?
What ?!

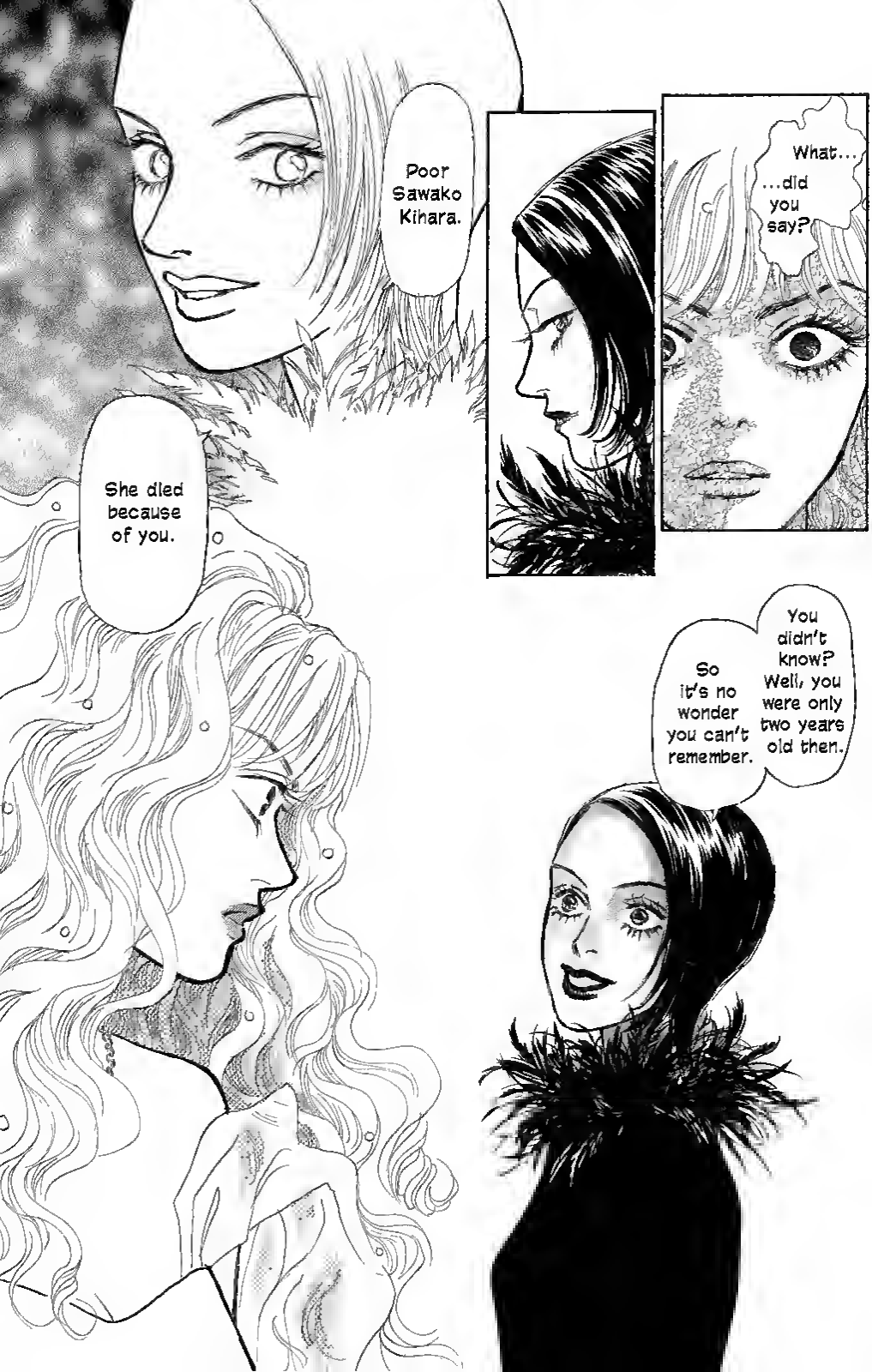
Sh-She's completely different!
What a splendid metamorphosis.
This is getting interesting!
SHOCK
i-It's just the appearance.
Her voice isn't suited for Lady Macbeth.

RATHER THAN HER SINGING ABILITY, IT'S MORE LIKE HER ACTING ABILITY.
HER DESIRE TO WIN IS QUITE ADMIRABLE.
MAYBE SHE'LL BE THE ONE TO TURN THIS WHOLE SITUATION AROUND.


WAHH
CLAP
CLAP
It was very well orchestrated. It's rare to see such a performance in this type of competition.
It was a bit staged, but wild.
To think that she could sing like that. I was quite shocked.
WAHH
FWEE
It was powerful and intense. Amazing!
Even her voice changed.
Right?
What a shock.
All she has is a strong voice. It's no big deal.
Stay focused!
Let out your voice like usual, and we'll win for sure!
Your skills are a lot better than hers.


She was sure that she would make it to the finals all along.
She acted like she didn't care, but brought those clothes.
Yes... I'm fine. Thank you for your concern...
Finally, we've come to the last contestant! Contestant number 30!
MOTHER ...
Shio Asami from Mita Music College!
We're up.
GRRR
Yes.


Do you know the truth behind the accident that caused Sawako Kihara's death?
Hey, Miss Asami...
The piece she's going to perform will be *Casta diva* from *Norma*!
What?
Professor Yamamoto must have made her practice it countless times.
She's sure making a grand entrance. Does she plan to compete with Maria Callas?
MY, MY!
Casta diva is the most difficult piece for a soprano to sing.
Your mother died from getting hit by a car while trying to protect her daughter.


Poor Sawako Kihara.
She died because of you.
What... ...did you say?
You didn't know? Well, you were only two years old then.
So it's no wonder you can't remember.

NO ONE EVER TOLD ME.
Miss Asami?
WHAT?
WHAT IS SHE SAYING?
What are you doing?! Hurry up!
MOTHER DIED BECAUSE OF ME?
IT HAS TO BE A LIE! FATHER SAID THAT MOTHER DIED IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT!
Ah... Yes...
I MISSED MY ENTRANCE!
She died because of you.

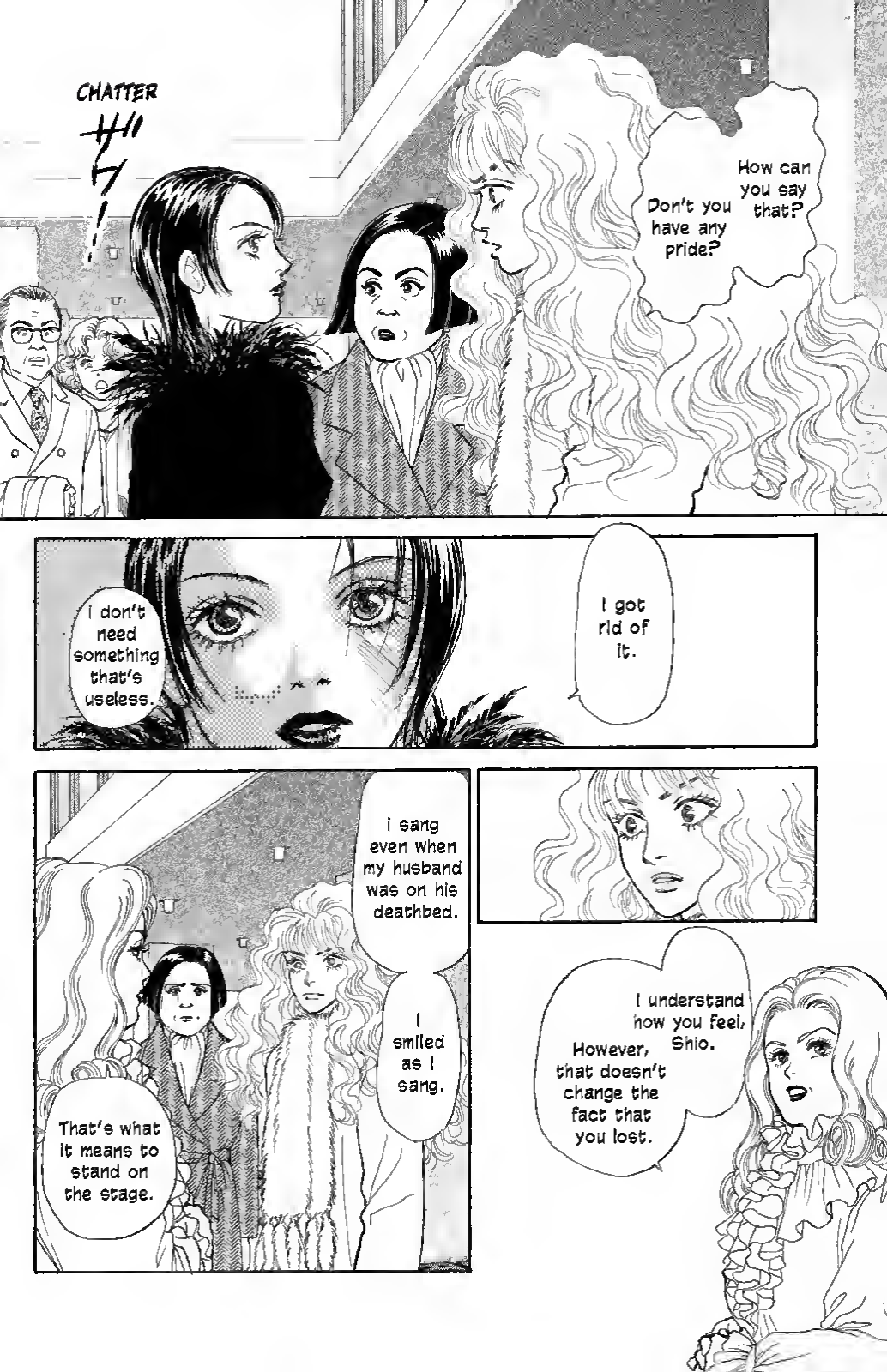
IDIOT! FOCUS ON YOUR SINGING!
What?
IT'LL BE OK! I'VE TRAINED SO HARD FOR THIS!
SHE'S UNEXPECTEDLY WEAK UNDER PRESSURE.
GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF!
WH-WHAT HAPPENED, SHI?!
She's out of sync.
What's she doing?
She seems to be struggling ...
NO! STOP THINKING ABOUT IT!
Poor Sawako Kihara.
WHISPER
I guess even she can choke.
CHATTER
FOCUS ON THE SONG!

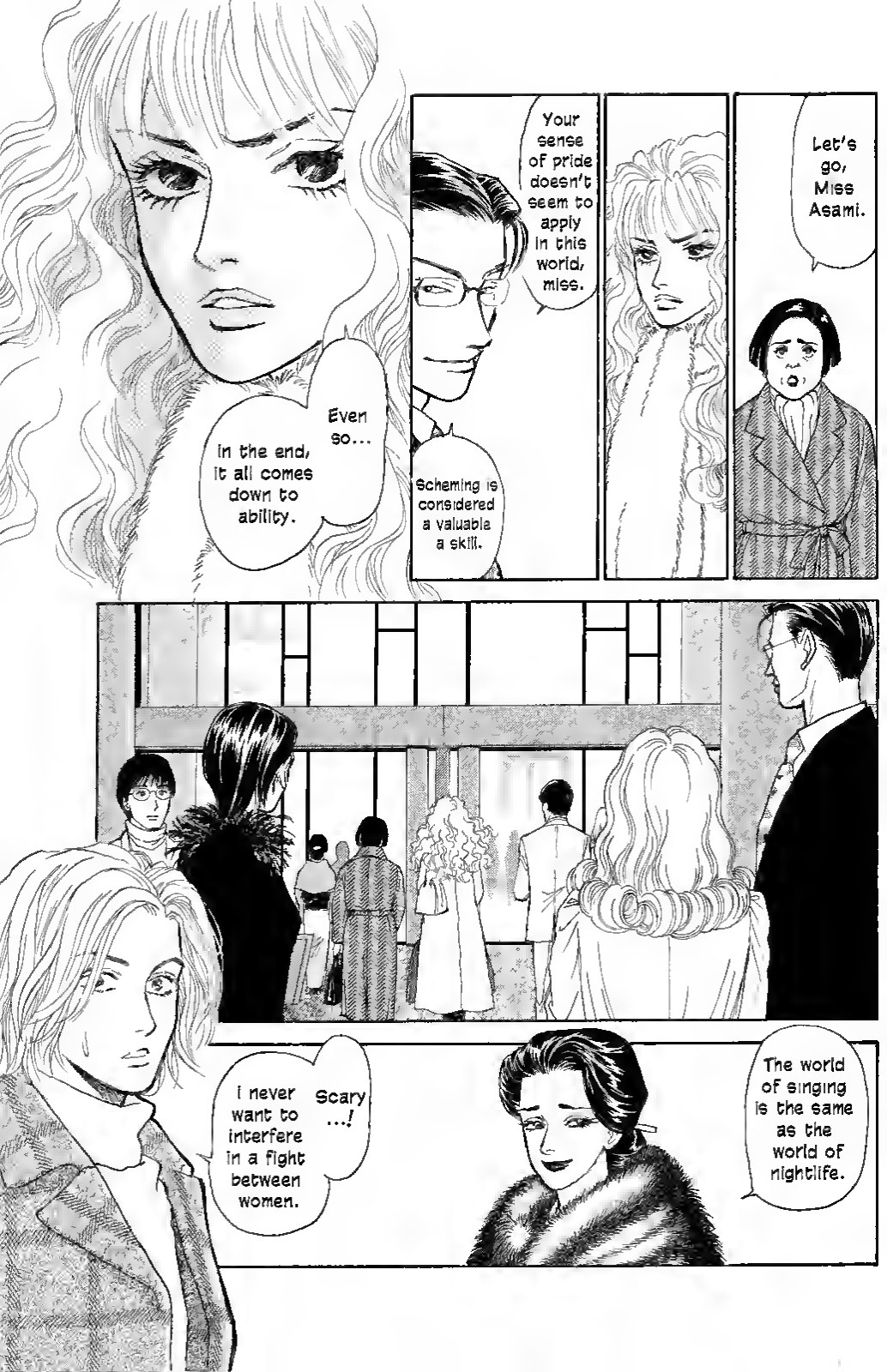
MOTHER!
MOTHER, HELP ME!
MY VOICE WON'T COME OUT!
WAHHH
110 CLAP
110 CLAP
I'm sorry...
Never mind.
The one who must be suffering the most is you, so I won't say anything.
Go and get changed.
あ！
HAHA

How could you?
You look well.
I've seen some of your performances.
It's been a while, Yamamoto.
You still play the piano so well.

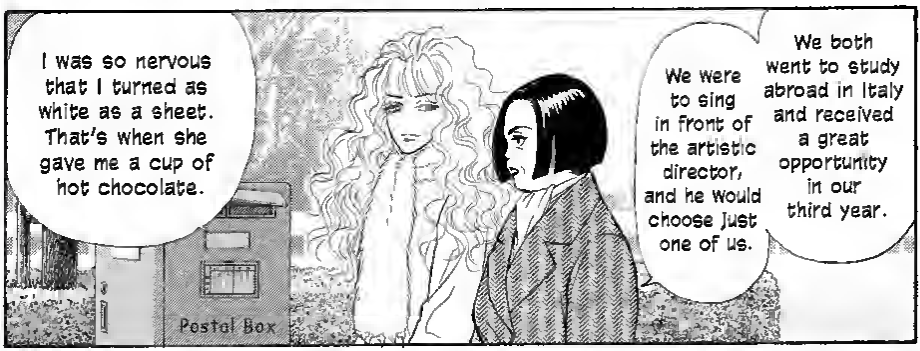
You're weaker than I thought.
I can't believe such a *small thing* could stop you from singing.
CHUCKLE
CHUCKLE
Miss Asami!
SMACK

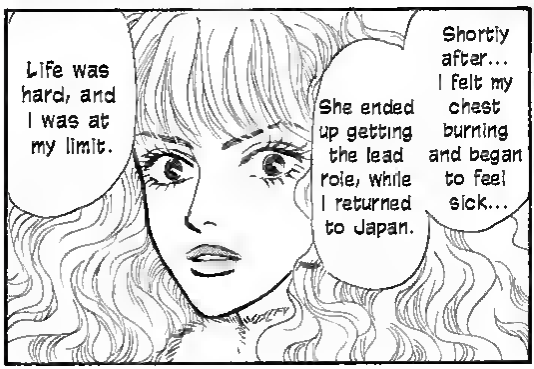
Don't resort to violence!
Stop this!
You would stoop this low just to win a competition?
Telling me that I caused my mother's death is a small thing?!
Small thing?!
Satisfied?
This much pain is nothing.
Yeah, I would.
Or would you prefer me to get down on my knees and beg for your forgiveness?
Go ahead. Hit me some more then.
I bet it's still not enough.
CHATTER

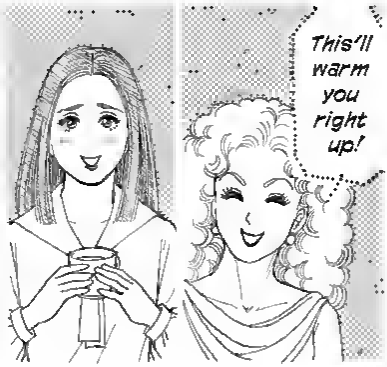

CHAPTER
#11
Don't you have any pride?
How can you say that?
I got rid of it.
I don't need something that's useless.
I sang even when my husband was on his deathbed.
I smiled as I sang.
That's what it means to stand on the stage.
I understand how you feel, Shio.
However, that doesn't change the fact that you lost.


Let's go, Miss Asami.
Your sense of pride doesn't seem to apply in this world, miss.
Scheming is considered a valuable a skill.
Even so...
In the end, it all comes down to ability.
The world of singing is the same as the world of nightlife.
Scary ...!
I never want to interfere in a fight between women.

You know, I...
...used to be Haruko Matsushima's rival.

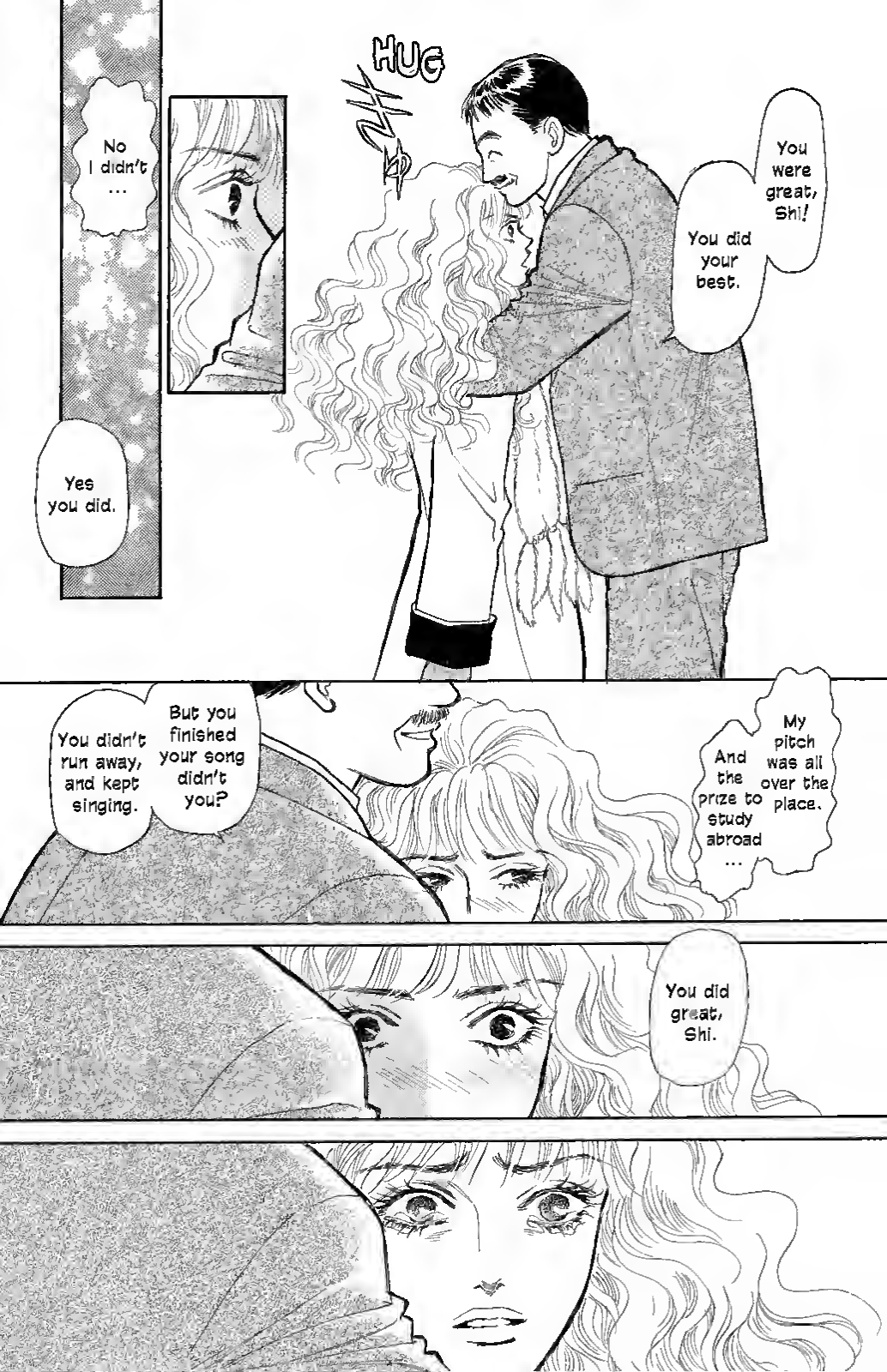

I was so nervous that I turned as white as a sheet. That's when she gave me a cup of hot chocolate.
We were to sing in front of the artistic director, and he would choose just one of us.
We both went to study abroad in Italy and received a great opportunity in our third year.
Postal Box

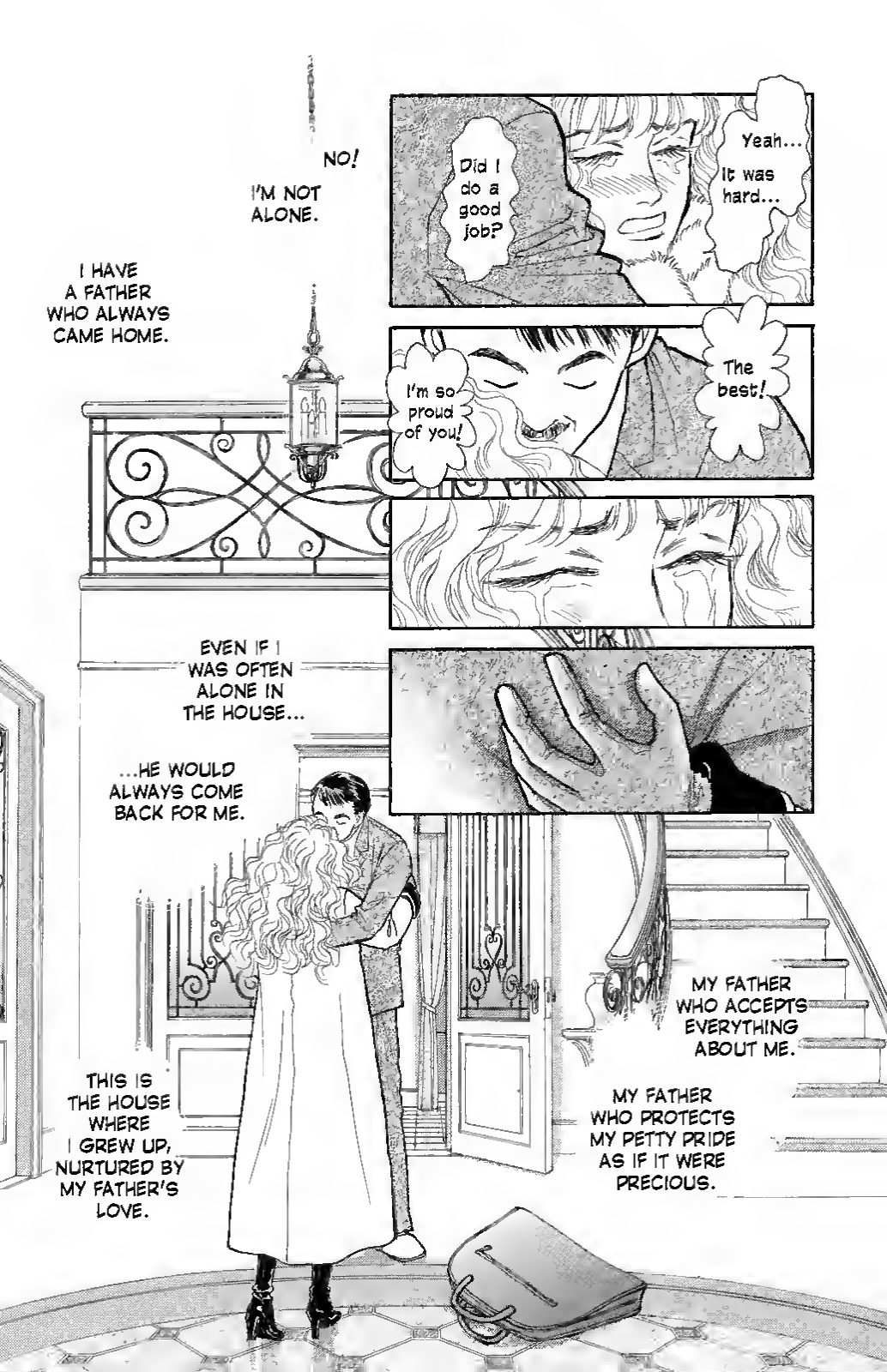

Life was hard, and I was at my limit.
She ended up getting the lead role, while I returned to Japan.
Shortly after... I felt my chest burning and began to feel sick...


This'll warm you right up!

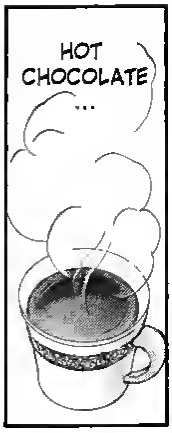
The statue that Haruko Matsushima holds now could have been mine!
If only I had thought of my rivals as enemies!
If only I hadn't drunk that hot chocolate!
I felt so bitter about it, that I told a friend.
But I didn't have any evidence.
She must have put something in that hot chocolate!
You were stupid to trust her.
You're so naive.
Isn't it natural to want to take down a rival when you can?
...I'm still bitter.
Even now...
One can't survive...
...solely on pride.
There are many things in this world that don't make sense.
You don't have your parents, money, or relatives
That's why your high sense of pride worries me, Miss Asami.

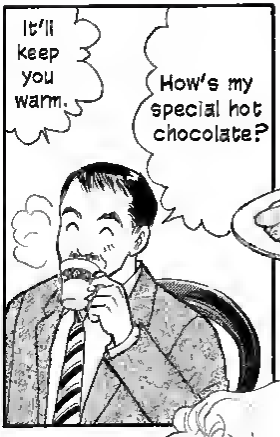
ASAMI
SOUICHIROU
カチ
CLANK
ゴトン
CLANK
WHETHER IT'S NOW OR IN THE PAST.
NO, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE.
...AS WELL AS MY FATHER WHEN HE GOES TO NEW ZEALAND. I'LL BE ALL ALONE.
THIS HOUSE WILL SOON BE GONE...


No I didn't ...
Yes you did.
HUG
You were great, Shi!
You did your best.
You didn't run away, and kept singing.
But you finished your song didn't you?
My pitch was all over the place.
And the prize to study abroad ...
You did great, Shi.


NO!
I'M NOT ALONE.
I HAVE A FATHER WHO ALWAYS CAME HOME.
Did I do a good job?
Yeah... It was hard...
I'm so proud of you!
The best!
EVEN IF I WAS OFTEN ALONE IN THE HOUSE...
...HE WOULD ALWAYS COME BACK FOR ME.
THIS IS THE HOUSE WHERE I GREW UP, NURTURED BY MY FATHER'S LOVE.
MY FATHER WHO ACCEPTS EVERYTHING ABOUT ME.
MY FATHER WHO PROTECTS MY PETTY PRIDE AS IF IT WERE PRECIOUS.

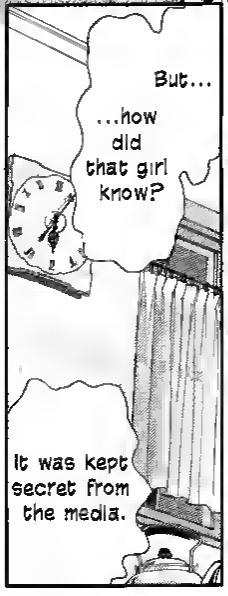
PRIDE 1


HOT CHOCOLATE ...

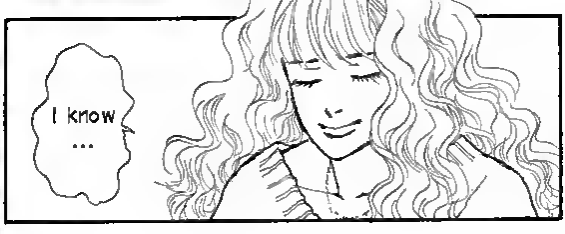

It'll keep you warm.
How's my special hot chocolate?

It's the best for winter.

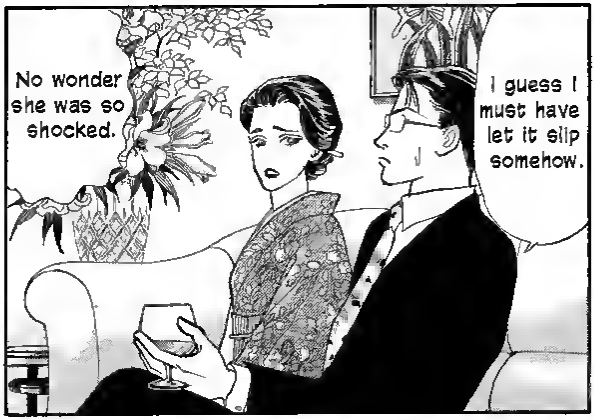
It's delicious.


But...
...how did that girl know?
It was kept secret from the media.

You were only two years old. It wasn't your fault.
You tottered onto the road and...
I hid the truth about your mother's death because I thought you'd be hurt by it.

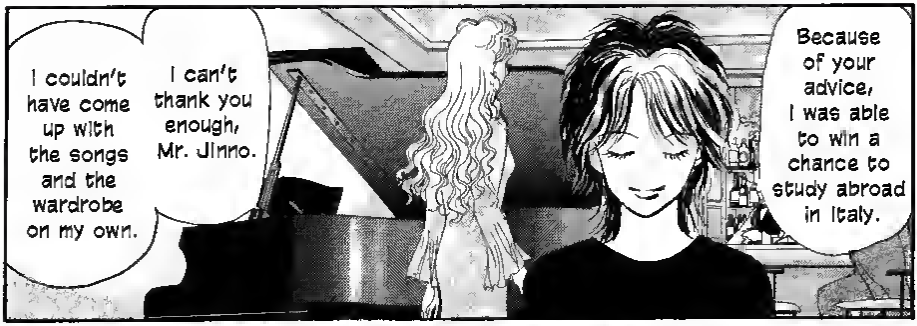

I know ...

KORYUU
SERRA
SATOSHI
CLUB KIKUMI
7
Sawako Kihara was signed to Queen Record.
My father was the one who told me the truth about her death.


No wonder she was so shocked.
I guess I must have let it slip somehow.

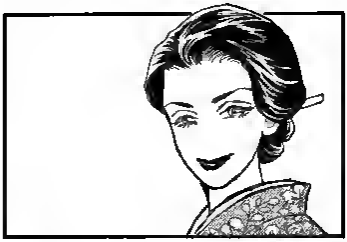
But, I didn't think you would tell her yourself.
Although I did say to seize any chance you get...
...no matter what shameless tricks you have to play.

PRIDE 1


I couldn't have come up with the songs and the wardrobe on my own.
I can't thank you enough, Mr. Jinno.
Because of your advice, I was able to win a chance to study abroad in Italy.

To think that it would lead to this...
I merely gave a dejected little girl a piece of advice.
It was because you kept pestering me.

I want to overcome my past self!
Please be my producer.
Mr. Jinno...



...how much of a loser I was.
It was Miss Asami who taught me...
I've... finally realized the truth.

Today at school, I wrote an essay on ***The Things I Want Most***. It'd be embarrassing to list a lot of things, so I wrote ***Father***. Actually, I wanted to write ***money***. If I had money, I'd be able to buy a big house, beautiful clothes, and even a piano. Mother would also be happy.

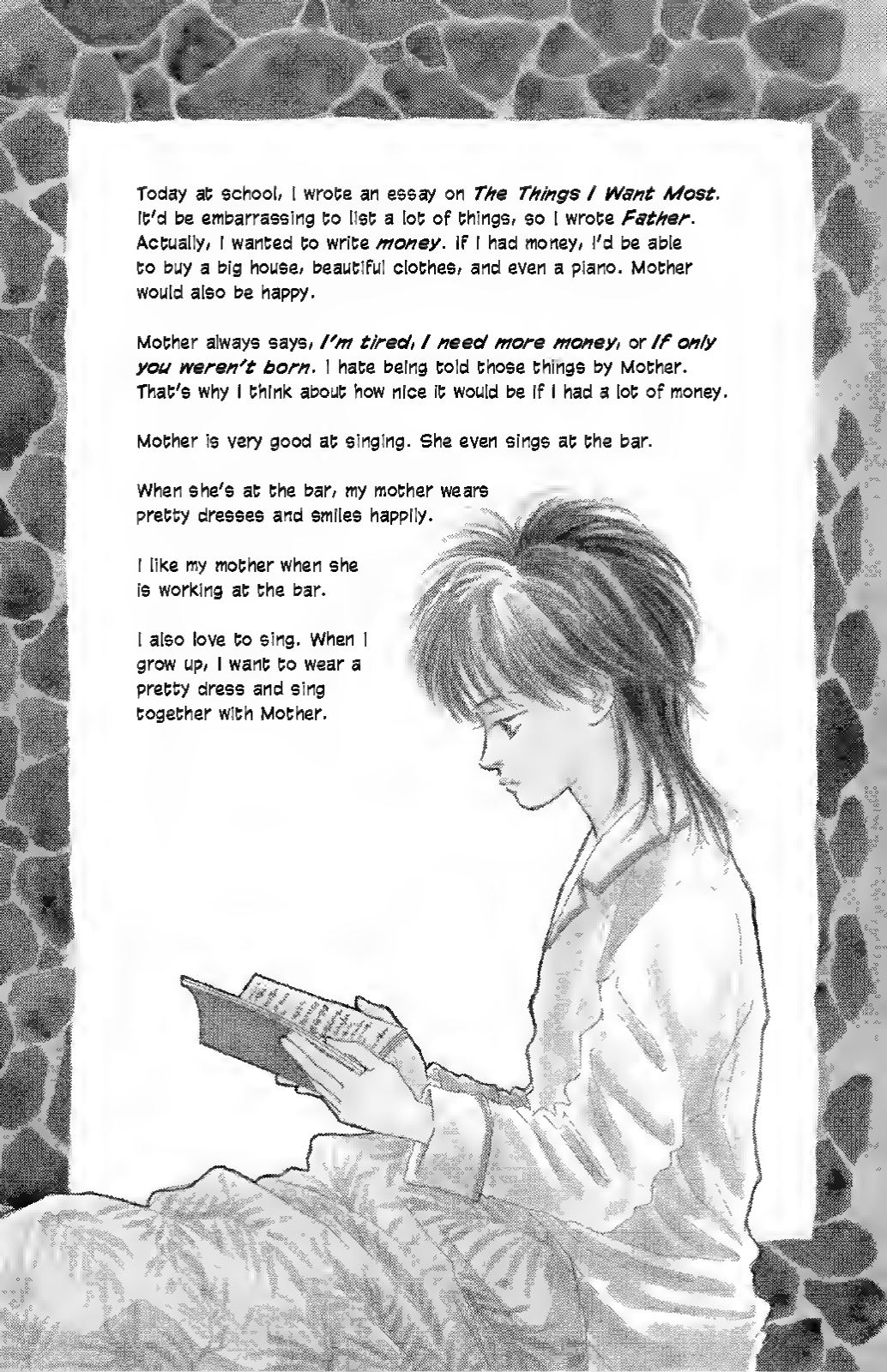
Mother always says, ***I'm tired***, ***I need more money***, or ***If only you weren't born***. I hate being told those things by Mother. That's why I think about how nice it would be if I had a lot of money.

Mother is very good at singing. She even sings at the bar.

When she's at the bar, my mother wears pretty dresses and smiles happily.

I like my mother when she is working at the bar.

I also love to sing. When I grow up, I want to wear a pretty dress and sing together with Mother.



PRIDE 1

SAPPORO BEER
SNACK FUMIYO
STUDENT DISCOUNTS
RAMEN
Grilled Chicken
PON NO YA
SNACK FUMIYO
GRILLED BEEF BOWL
RRR!
BAM!!!
Excuse me!
I WANT TO SING TOGETHER WITH MOTHER, HUH...
An old woman with a 21-year-old brat!
What singer? I'm just an old hostess in a rundown bar.
You're a singer, so you shouldn't drink so much. What if you lose your voice again?
Moe's here to take you home.

She said she was dumped by a man again.
She just doesn't learn.
.....
It's a sickness.
What?
How dare you talk to me like that!
If only you weren't born, I could've gotten married!
What are you saying, Tami?
You said it yourself that you'd have given birth no matter what!
Geez... It's a miracle that Moe didn't turn out bad.
Act more like a mother!
What a joke!
Who do you think let her go to that expensive music school?

I've raised her all alone since I was twenty!
Of course she does!
Moe has to work two to three part-time jobs.

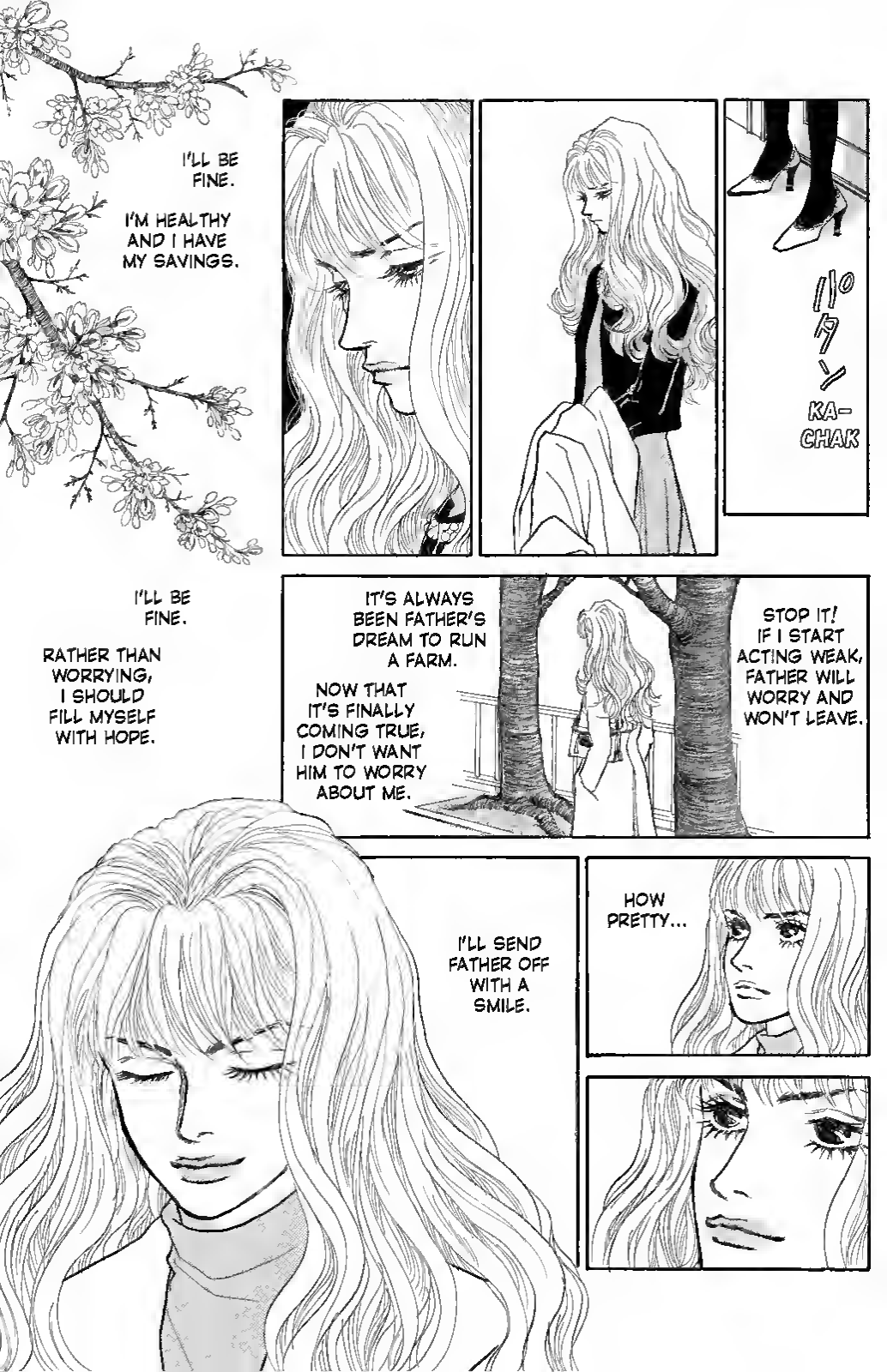
Mom... Let's go home.
The bar's already closed.
Dammit. They're all nice only at the start...
SWIG
SWIG

SPLASHH
Gimme back my youth!
It's always the same and it's all your fault!
He said he didn't want to be the father of a 21-year-old.

TAMIKO
MIDORIKAWA
MOE
SNORRR
SNOR
SNORE
WHAT A LOSER.
I'LL GO STUDY IN ITALY.
JUST A BIT MORE...
THIS IS THE FIRST BIG OPPORTUNITY I'VE HAD SINCE I WAS BORN. AND I SEIZED IT WITH MY OWN HANDS.
I WON'T CATER TO ANYONE, AND I'LL SING ONLY THE SONGS I LIKE.
JUST A BIT MORE TILL I CAN LEAVE THIS PLACE.

I WAS HAPPY JUST BEING ABLE TO GO TO A MUSIC SCHOOL.
BUT THAT'S ALL CHANGED EVER SINCE I MET MR. JINNO.
I MEANT TO KEEP DOING MY BEST UP UNTIL NOW, BUT I NEVER PUT MY HEART INTO IT.
IF I HAD GIVEN UP...
...EVERYTHING WOULD HAVE ENDED AND I WOULD'VE BEEN TRAPPED IN THAT HOUSE.
THANK GOD...
...I DIDN'T GIVE UP.
I'M SO GLAD THAT I DIDN'T GIVE UP!
Sorry for the wait!

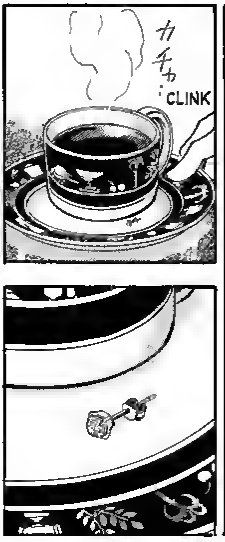
I don't think I'm skilled enough to be a translator.
But I'll give it a try.
Thank you very much.
...but with this economy, there are fewer students.
YAMAMOTO OFFICE
I also tried asking a friend who runs a music school...
I suppose it's to be expected.
You can play the piano, sing, and speak Italian. You'll definitely be able to find a job.
Maybe you could try translating.
Why don't you try putting an ad up on the internet?
You know those ads in the newspaper about people offering piano lessons?
...I took everything for granted.
It's really true...
Yes. My father helped me find it. I'll be moving in tomorrow.
It was my first time going to a real estate agent.
Have you found a place to live?
I never imagined that a place like my room was around $3,000 a month. There's no way I could afford that.


I'LL BE FINE.
I'M HEALTHY AND I HAVE MY SAVINGS.
パタン
KA-CHAK
I'LL BE FINE.
RATHER THAN WORRYING, I SHOULD FILL MYSELF WITH HOPE.
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN FATHER'S DREAM TO RUN A FARM.
NOW THAT IT'S FINALLY COMING TRUE, I DON'T WANT HIM TO WORRY ABOUT ME.
STOP IT! IF I START ACTING WEAK, FATHER WILL WORRY AND WON'T LEAVE.
I'LL SEND FATHER OFF WITH A SMILE.
HOW PRETTY...

You want me to hold off on studying abroad?
VRRRM

I want to go right away!
Don't worry.
I want my coffee black.
My eggs half-boiled.
VRRRM
And a fruit salad.
I don't need toast.

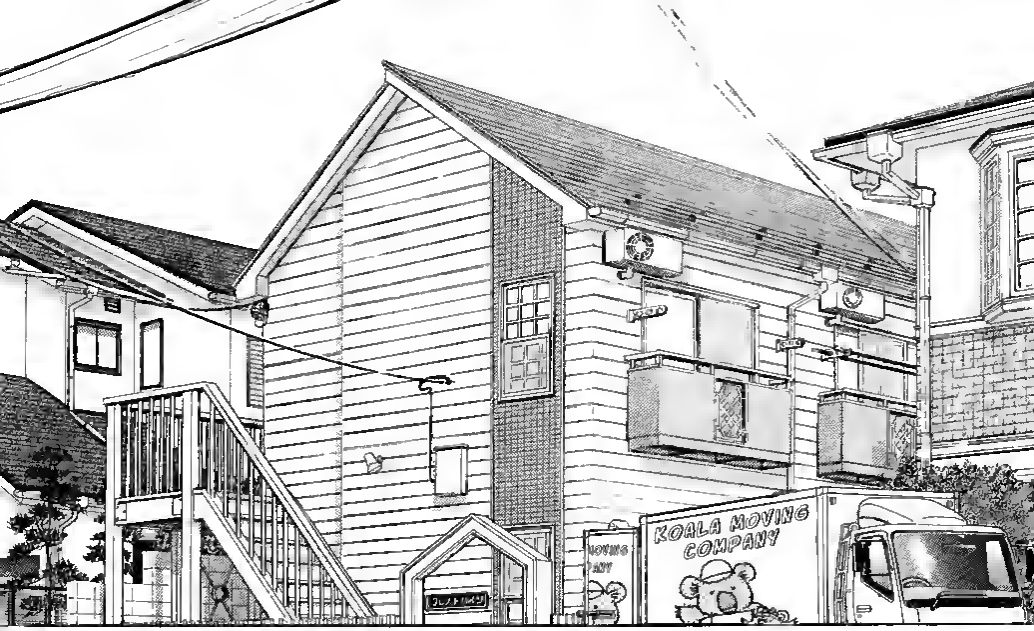
It was left in the washroom.
It might have been intentional.

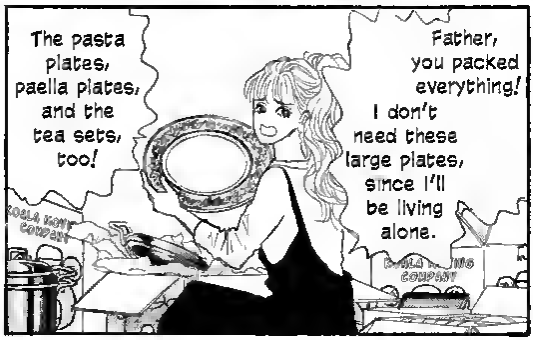

カチャ
CLINK

OK...

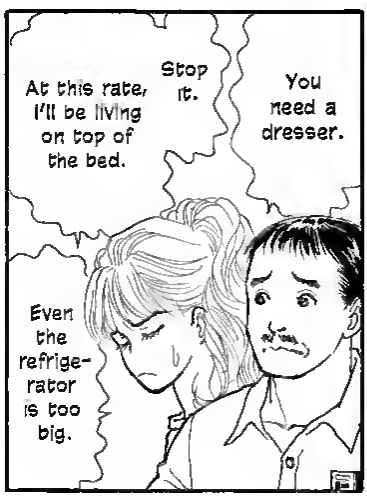
PRIDE 1

There'll be an opera performed at Queen's Hall in early August.
The opera will be *La bohème*, and the lead character is to be played by an Italian.
You can play one of the minor roles.
Of course, you'll need a lot of training.
FLICK
Doesn't matter to me.
Even if you do go to Italy, it'll be beneficial to build relationships with the cast.
It's good to see behind the scenes of a top-class production
Take this as a reward for pushing you to be my maid.
The coffee you make is better than the coffee my secretary makes.
Yes...


KOALA MOVING COMPANY


The pasta plates, paella plates, and the tea sets, too!
Father, you packed everything!
I don't need these large plates, since I'll be living alone.

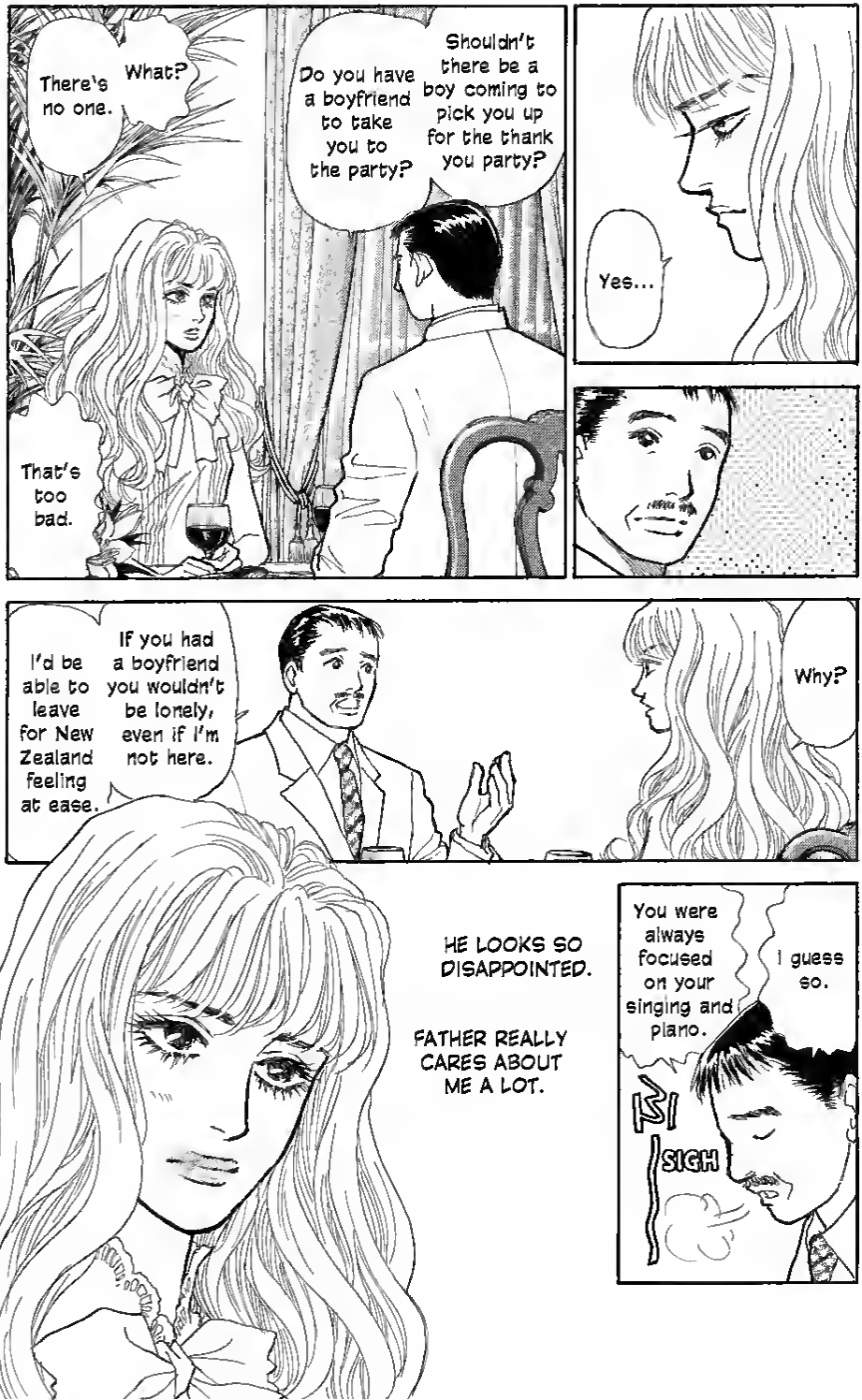
Have you cleaned up the kitchen?
This is the last box.
KOALA MOVING COMPANY

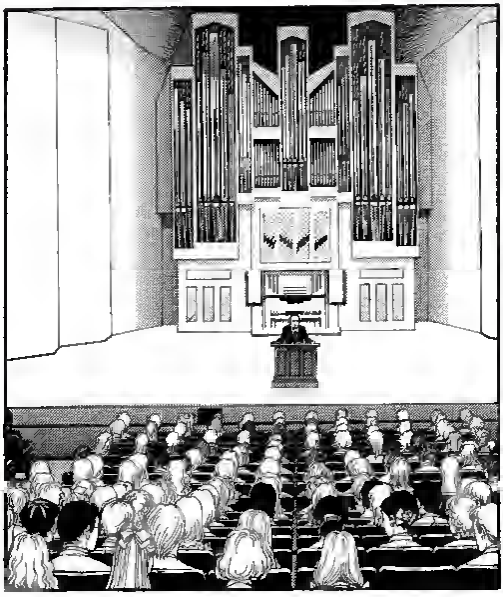

At this rate, I'll be living on top of the bed.
Stop it.
You need a dresser.
Even the refrige-rator is too big.

Let's sell some of the furniture and give the money to the employees as severance pay.
At least I won't have to clean up much.
HIC
うっ
HIC
うっ
M-My Shi has to live in such a small room...
... without even a dresser!
I'll study more Italian to obtain a translator license, so I can rent a bigger room.
I also plan to teach singing and piano.
Don't worry, Father.
Th-Then, I'll look forward to it!
Great! Then let's finish cleaning up.
So wait for me.
And I will definitely visit you in New Zealand.

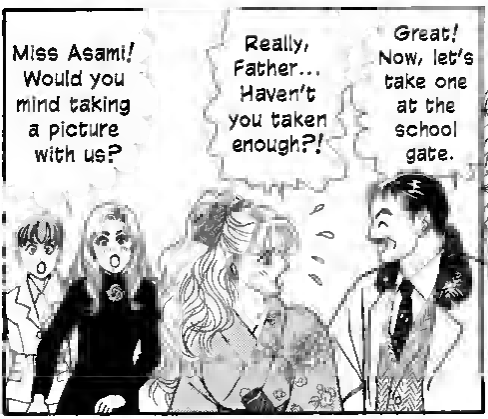
To Father's second chance in life.
And may I never forget all the happy memories of being raised in this house.
To our last night living in this house.
The cherry blossoms bloomed early this year, so your graduation ceremony tomorrow will be beautiful.
SOUICHIROU ASAMI
Cheers!
It would be hard on both of us if you saw me off at the airport.
I want to leave this house as if I were going on a business trip.
You also have to attend your graduation ceremony.
You can't.
You have to attend the thank you party.
カチン CLINK
カチン CLINK
I really should see you off at the airport tomorrow.
Father ...

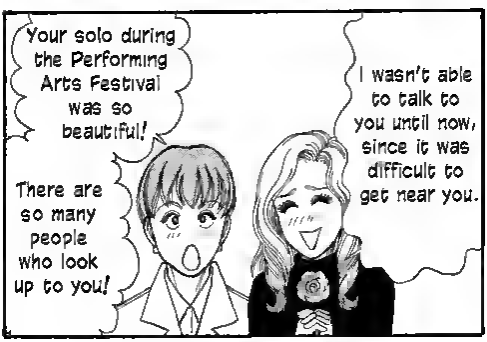
PRIDE 1


What?
There's no one.
Do you have a boyfriend to take you to the party?
Shouldn't there be a boy coming to pick you up for the thank you party?
That's too bad.
Yes...
Why?
If you had a boyfriend you wouldn't be lonely, even if I'm not here.
I'd be able to leave for New Zealand feeling at ease.
HE LOOKS SO DISAPPOINTED.
FATHER REALLY CARES ABOUT ME A LOT.
You were always focused on your singing and piano.
I guess so.
SIGH



51st GRADUATION CEREMONY
三笠音楽大学
MITA MUSIC COLLEGE
SINCE 1948


Miss Asami! Would you mind taking a picture with us?
Really, Father... Haven't you taken enough?!
Great! Now, let's take one at the school gate.

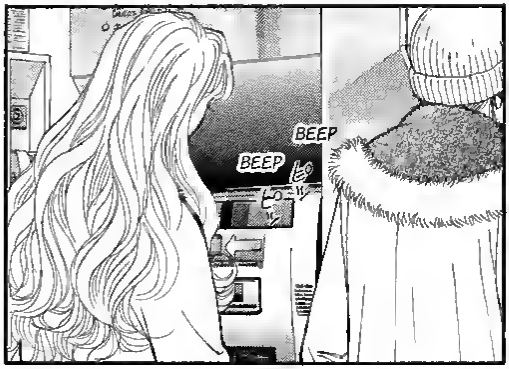

Your solo during the Performing Arts Festival was so beautiful!
There are so many people who look up to you!
I wasn't able to talk to you until now, since it was difficult to get near you.

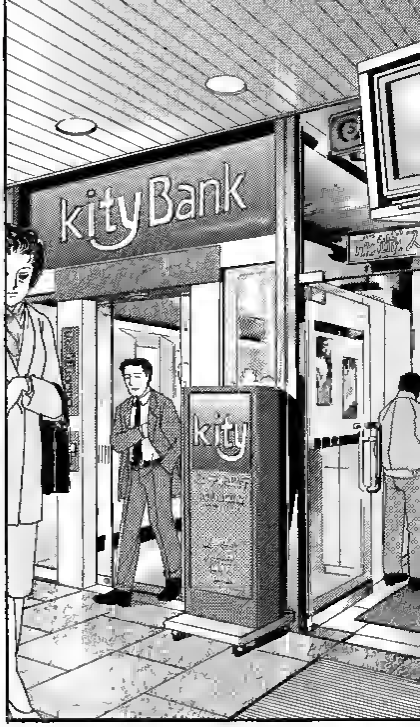
CLICK
Come on, Shi! Smile like you mean it.
CLICK

I always thought...
...everyone disliked me.
Excuse me! If you don't mind, please take a picture with me!
Hey, me too!
Popular, aren't you Shi? ♪
I'm so happy that you'll be staying at our school!
I asked first!
Please take a picture with me, Ikenohata! ♡
OK! I'll take photos together with the first five people!
Hey, now! This isn't a uniform, so stop trying to take the buttons!

I need to stop by the clothing rental shop, so I'll be home in about an hour.
OK. Then, I'll see you later.
AAH!
WHAT SHI LIKES ...
Oh, no! The set of okonomiyaki ingredients I ordered for Katagiri!
I HAVE TO GO PAY FOR IT!
Oh, and the takoyaki griddle, too...
With red pickled ginger, green laver, sweetened bean sauce...
His cross-dressing during the school festival left me with goose bumps, but his beauty made him famous.
He's the prince of the piano department!
Impressive ...
YAMAHA
NOOO
KYAA
I WONDER IF SHI LIKES THAT KIND OF GUY.
YOU CERTAINLY CAN'T TELL FROM HIS FACE WHETHER HE'S A MALE OR A FEMALE.
FATHER WILL BE LEAVING IN LESS THAN THREE HOURS.
THAT WALLET...
...WOULD SUIT FATHER WELL...
Thank you very much!
KAZU CLOTHING

PRIDE 1


BEEP
BEEP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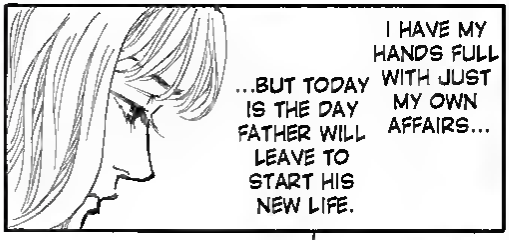
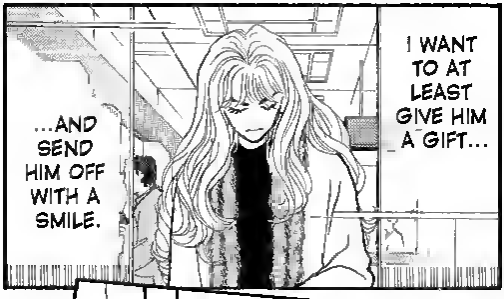
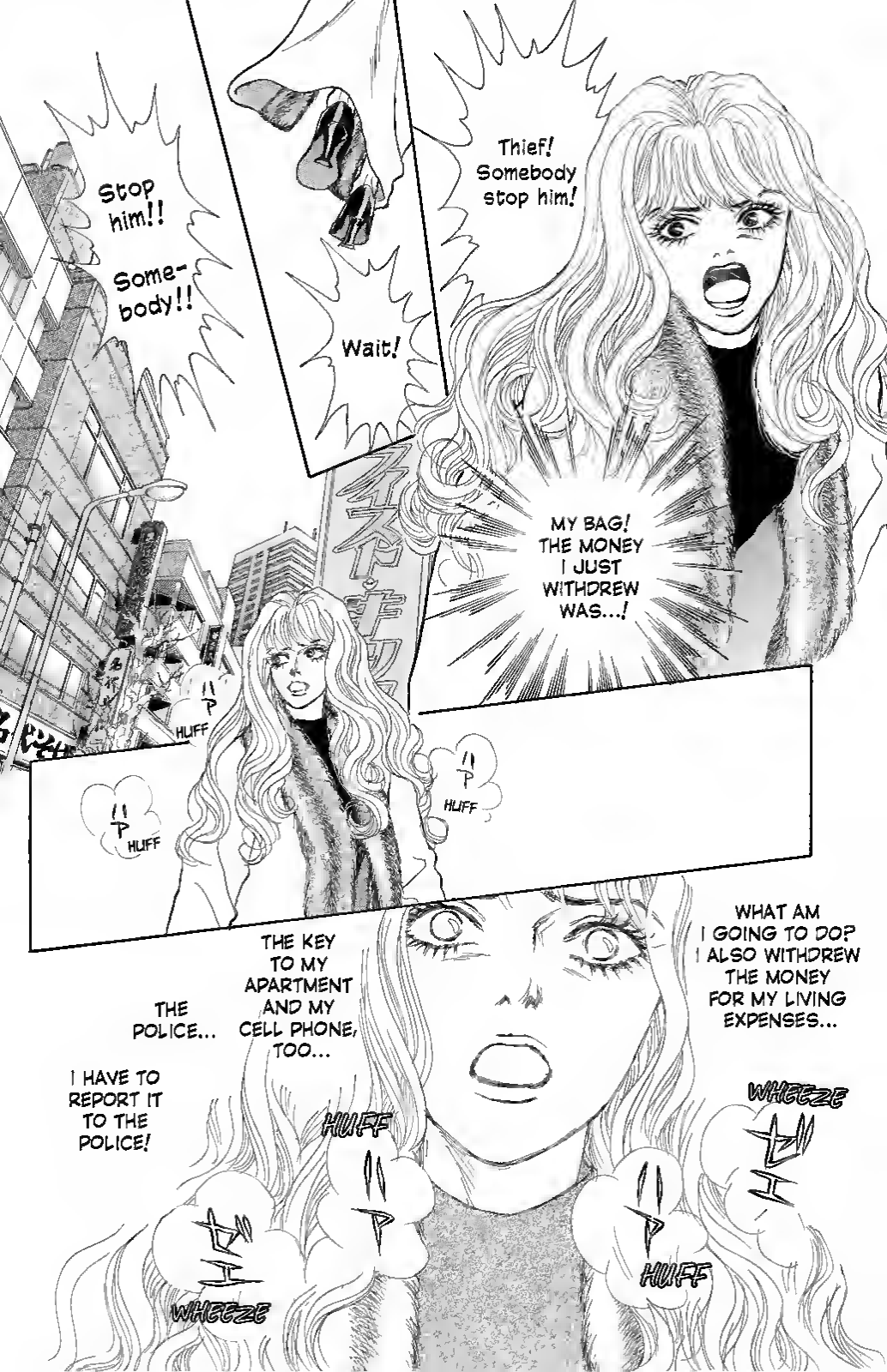

I HAVE MY HANDS FULL WITH JUST MY OWN AFFAIRS...
...BUT TODAY IS THE DAY FATHER WILL LEAVE TO START HIS NEW LIFE.


I WANT TO AT LEAST GIVE HIM A GIFT...
...AND SEND HIM OFF WITH A SMILE.

AHHH!
YANK

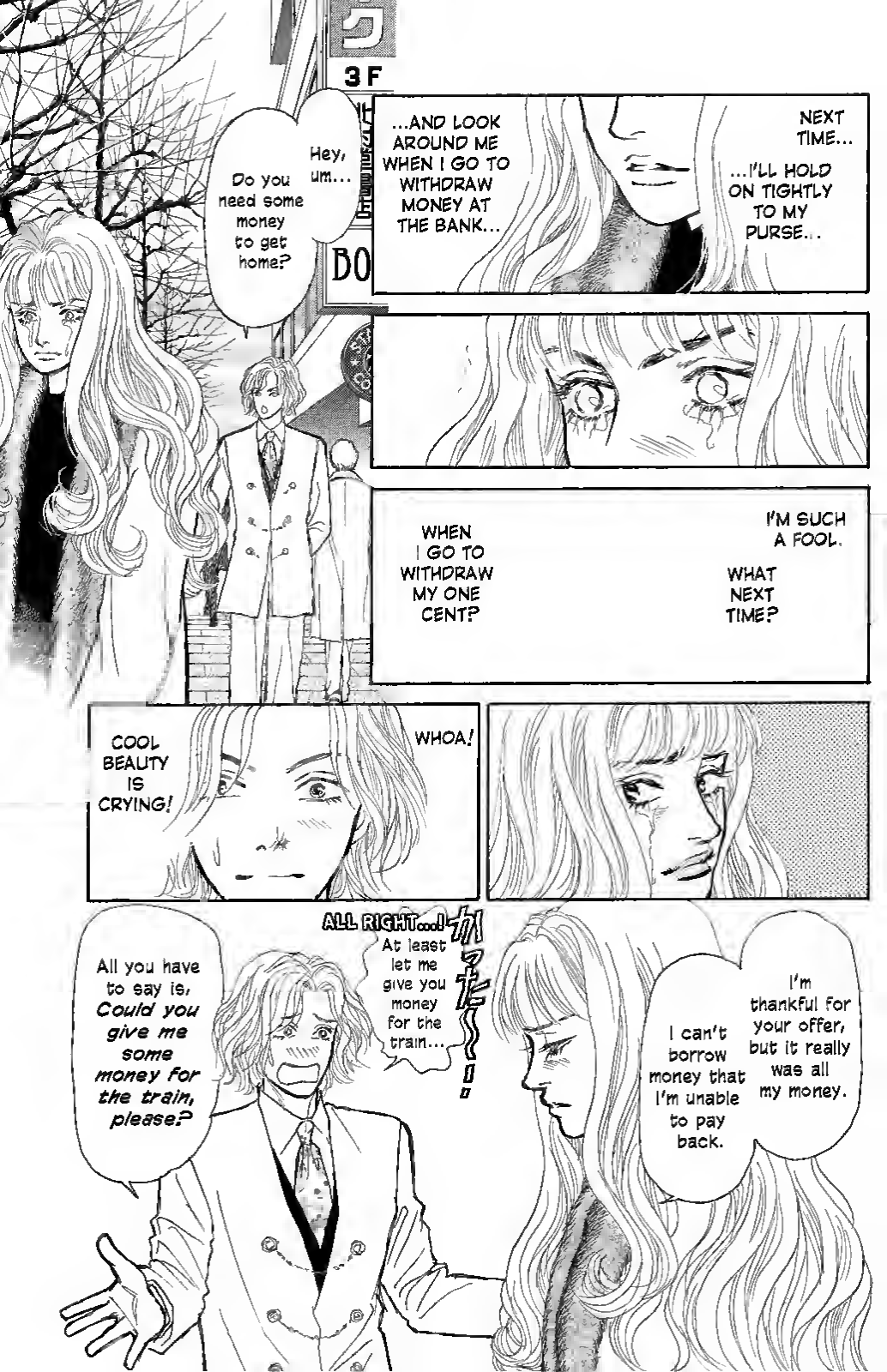

Stop him!!
Some-body!!
Wait!
Thief! Somebody stop him!
MY BAG! THE MONEY I JUST WITHDREW WAS...!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
THE POLICE...
THE KEY TO MY APARTMENT AND MY CELL PHONE, TOO...
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I ALSO WITHDREW THE MONEY FOR MY LIVING EXPENSES...
I HAVE TO REPORT IT TO THE POLICE!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
WHEEZE
WHEEZE

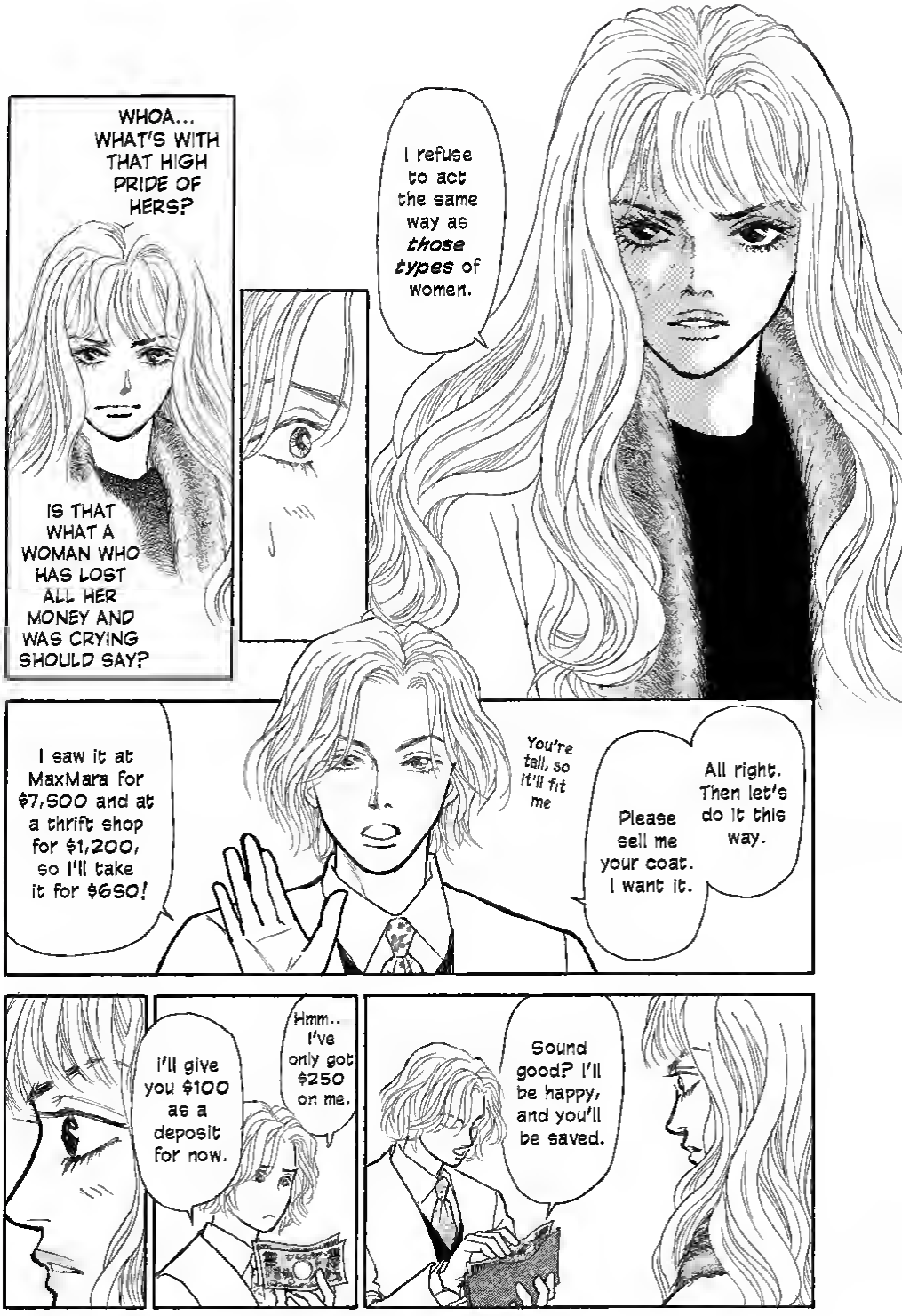
Excuse me. I found this bag on the floor.
I highly doubt that your cash will be returned.
That's why we warned everyone to keep a tight hold on their purses.
There've been a lot of purse snatchers recently.
POLICE
WANTED
That's my...!
Yes...
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?
OH, NO...
As well as the color and shape of your purse
Please write down the contents of your purse on this form.
Now, then. Please check the contents of your purse.
Today was the graduation ceremony, wasn't it? This lady had her purse stolen.
We're both students at Mita Music College.
It's one-sided.
Oh!
It's *Cool Beauty* ...
Do you two know each other?
?

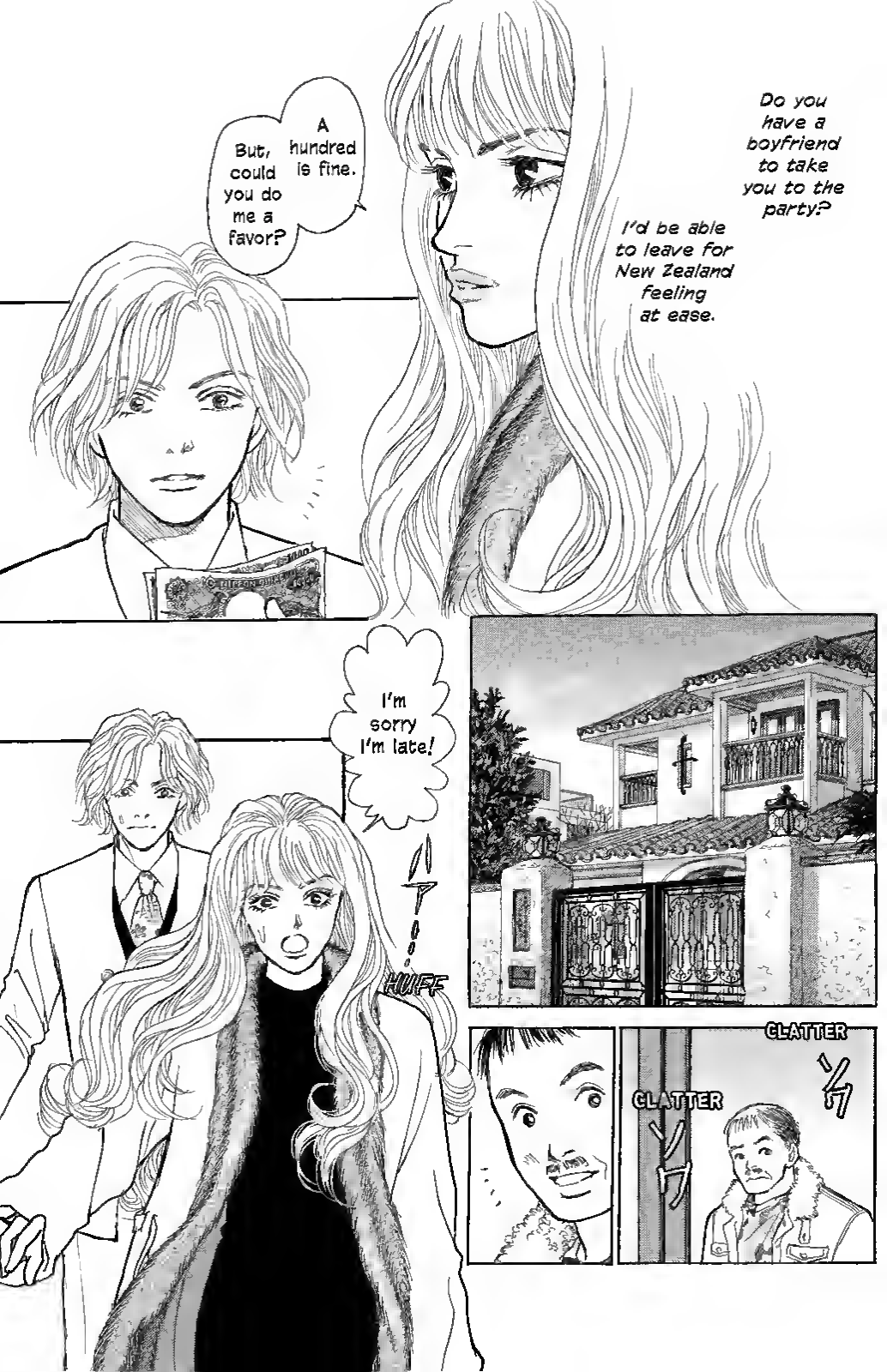
WHAT THE HELL?!
Call the bank and check your account balance! It might be all gone!
Yes. It was right after I withdrew money from the ATM.
B-But... only I know the PIN number.
Only my wallet is...
Your debit card as well?
Weren't there people behind you or near you?! Someone might've seen you enter it in, stole your purse, and withdrew your cash!
カタッ
TAP
The balance was... one cent.
How much was supposed to be in it?
Around $63,000
WHAT?!

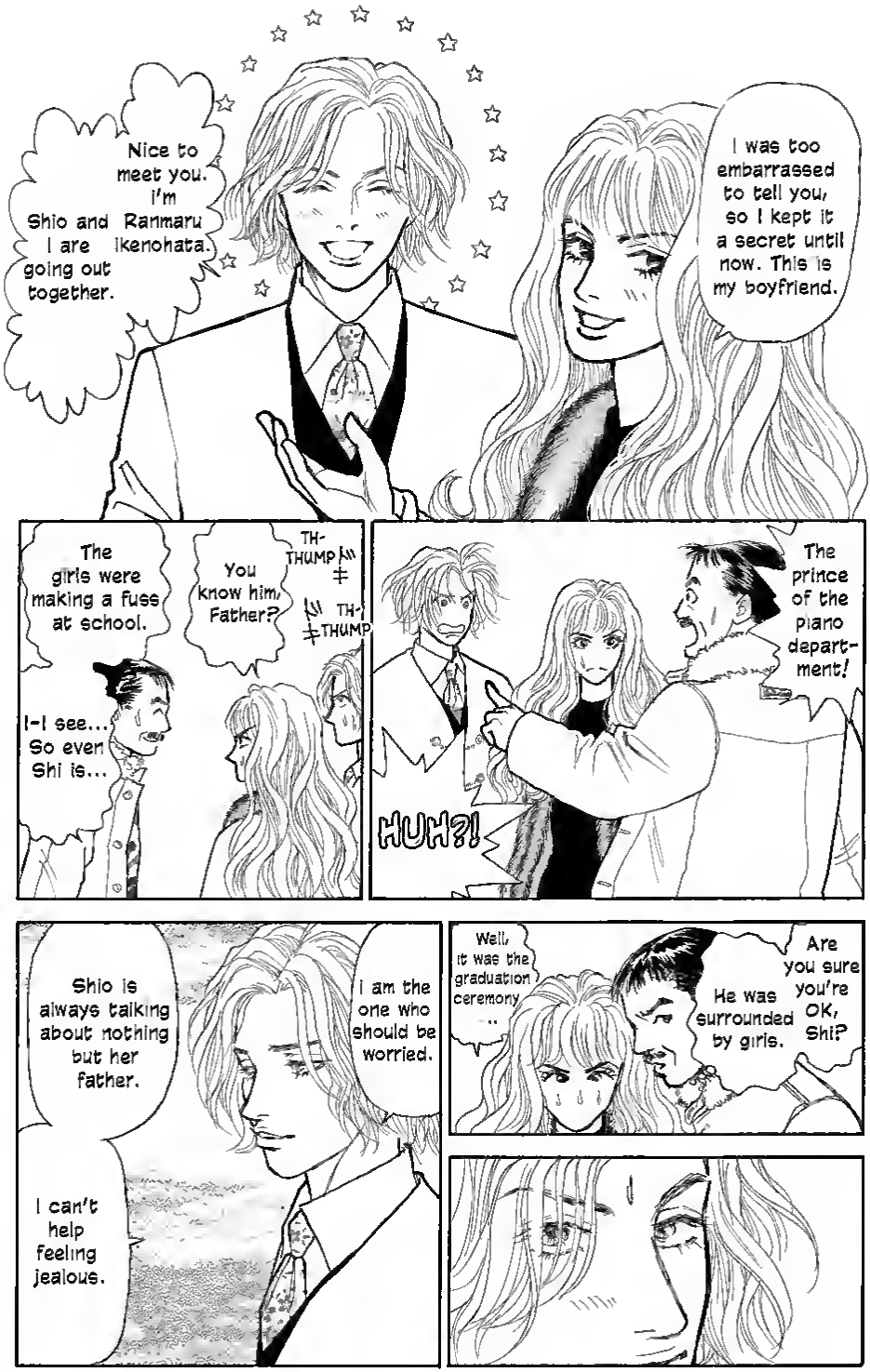
That was my entire savings!
I needed it, since I have to live on my own!
Wow, that's ...
...what you call rich...
W-Well... your family's rich, so it shouldn't be a big deal...
It *is* a big deal!
Huh?
Today I'll be moving to the address in the file. Please let me know of any news concerning this.
Thank you for your help.
I'll go ahead and submit your theft report. But even if we catch the criminal, you won't be getting your money back.
Ah...
It's fine. Don't worry about it.
...but I vented it on you.
I'm sorry. It's a private matter...

I MUST LOOK TERRIBLE.
IF I SEE HIM NOW, HE'LL PROBABLY TELL ME THAT HE'S NOT GOING ANYMORE.
I HAVE TO GO HOME OR FATHER WILL BE WORRIED...
JUST MOVED? APARTMENT?
SHOULDN'T COOL BEAUTY BE LIVING IN A MANSION?
OH, MAN. SHE'S IN TOTAL SHOCK.
I DON'T EVEN HAVE MONEY TO TAKE THE TRAIN.
CAN I BORROW SOME MONEY FROM THE POLICEMAN?
BUT, HOW WILL I PAY HIM BACK WITH ONLY A CENT IN MY ACCOUNT?

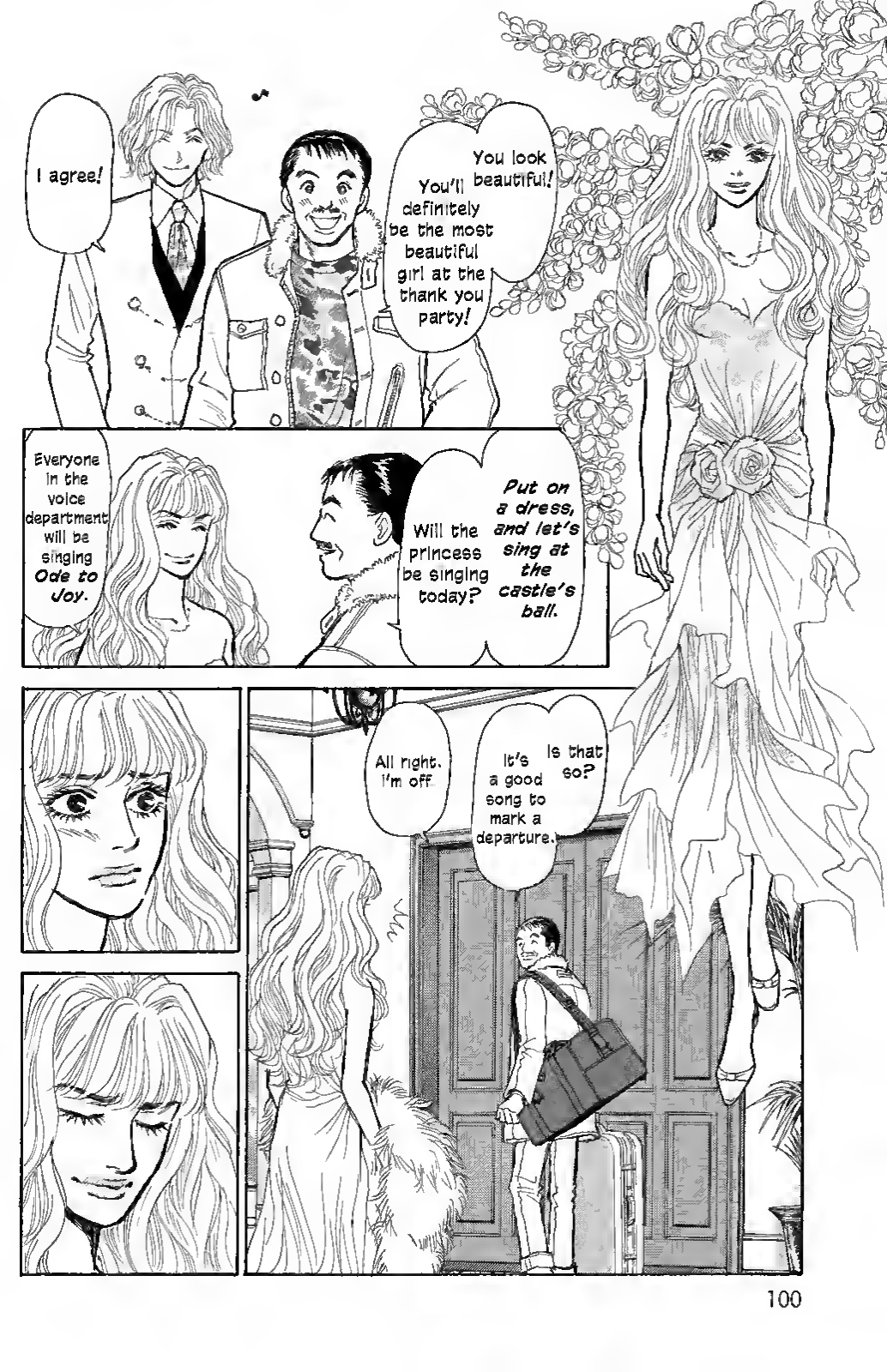

3F
Hey, um...
Do you need some money to get home?
...AND LOOK AROUND ME WHEN I GO TO WITHDRAW MONEY AT THE BANK...
NEXT TIME...
...I'LL HOLD ON TIGHTLY TO MY PURSE...
WHEN I GO TO WITHDRAW MY ONE CENT?
I'M SUCH A FOOL.
WHAT NEXT TIME?
WHOA!
COOL BEAUTY IS CRYING!
ALL RIGHT...!
At least let me give you money for the train...
All you have to say is, Could you give me some money for the train, please?
I can't borrow money that I'm unable to pay back.
I'm thankful for your offer, but it really was all my money.

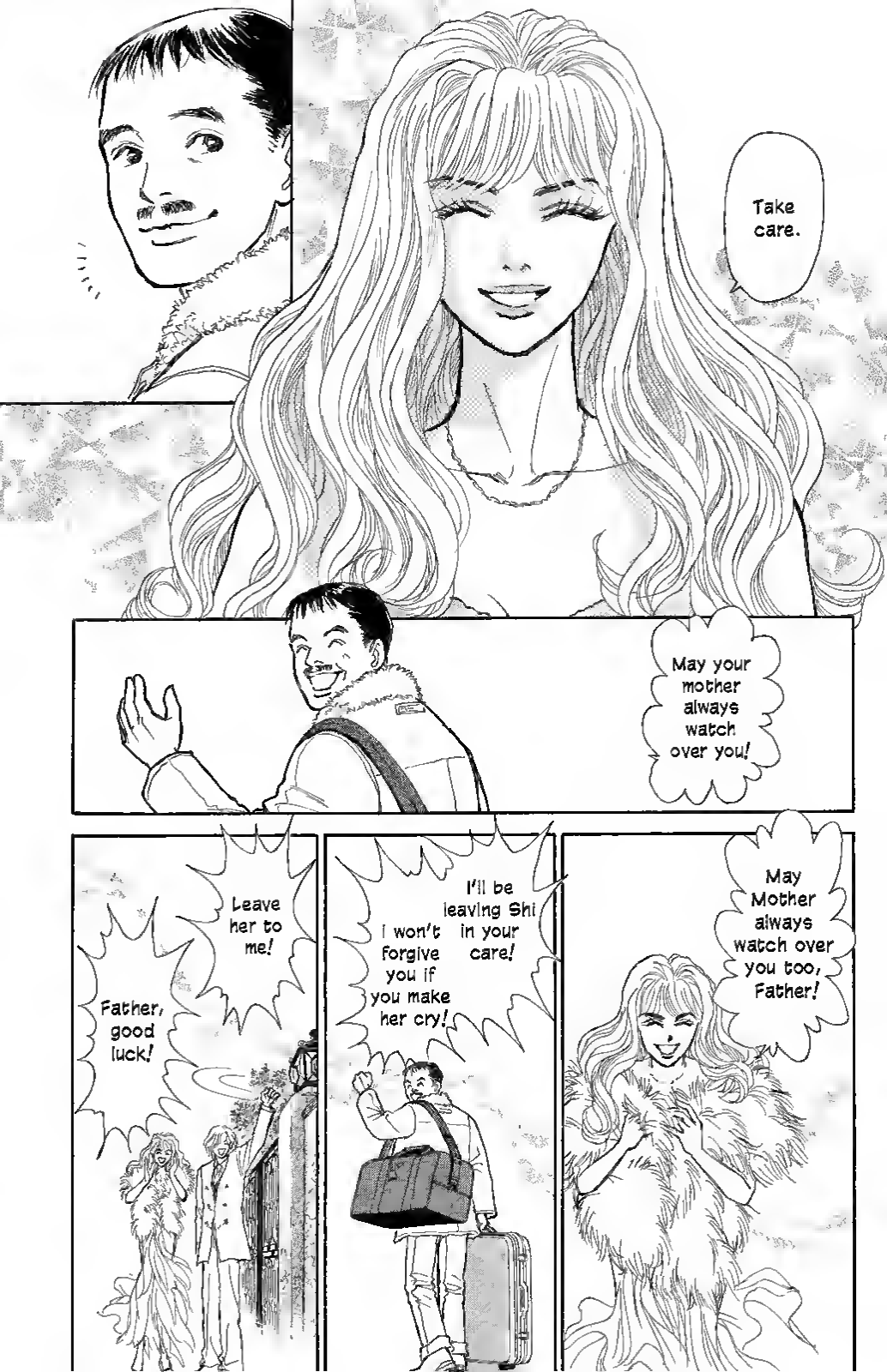

WHOA... WHAT'S WITH THAT HIGH PRIDE OF HERS?
IS THAT WHAT A WOMAN WHO HAS LOST ALL HER MONEY AND WAS CRYING SHOULD SAY?
I refuse to act the same way as *those types* of women.
I saw it at MaxMara for $7,500 and at a thrift shop for $1,200, so I'll take it for $650!
You're tall, so it'll fit me
Please sell me your coat. I want it.
All right. Then let's do it this way.
I'll give you $100 as a deposit for now.
Hmm.. I've only got $250 on me.
Sound good? I'll be happy, and you'll be saved.


Do you have a boyfriend to take you to the party?
I'd be able to leave for New Zealand feeling at ease.
But, could you do me a favor?
A hundred is fine.
I'm sorry I'm late!
HUFF
CLATTER
CLATTER


Nice to meet you. I'm Ranmaru Ikenohata. Shio and I are going out together.
I was too embarrassed to tell you, so I kept it a secret until now. This is my boyfriend.
The girls were making a fuss at school.
You know him, Father?
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
I-I see... So even Shi is...
The prince of the piano department!
HUH?!
Shio is always talking about nothing but her father.
I am the one who should be worried.
I can't help feeling jealous.
Well, it was the graduation ceremony...
He was surrounded by girls.
Are you sure you're OK, Shi?

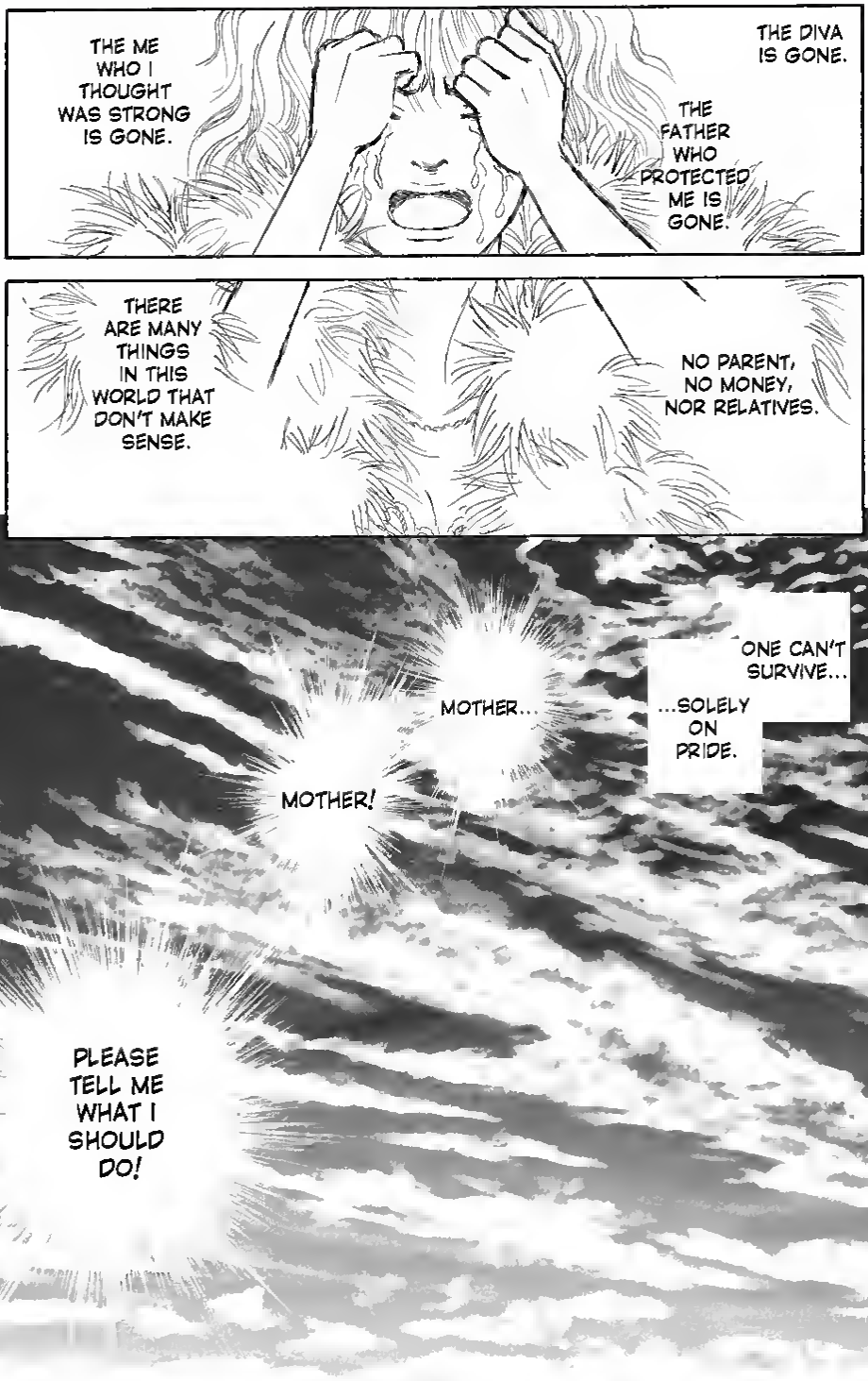
I'm happy to have met you.
Don't worry. I'll be sure to protect Shio.
I came here just to tell you that.
Really?
I felt left out since she wouldn't let me meet you, but...
...you are just as I had imagined.
She's easily misunderstood, so please watch out for her!
I will, Father-In-Law!
She's hard-working, serious, and states her opinions clearly.
Please!
I'll leave her in your care, Ranmaru!
Shi may look cold, but she's actually a kind and gentle girl.

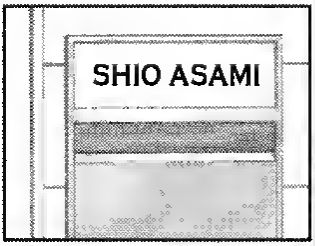

I agree!
You look beautiful!
You'll definitely be the most beautiful girl at the thank you party!
Everyone in the voice department will be singing *Ode to Joy*.
Will the princess be singing today?
Put on a dress, and let's sing at the castle's ball.
All right. I'm off.
It's a good song to mark a departure.
Is that so?

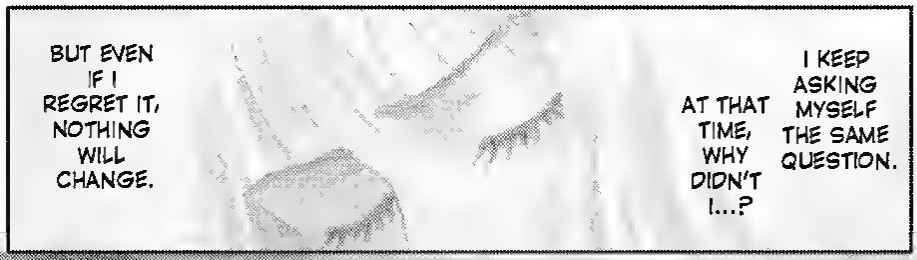

Take care.
May your mother always watch over you!
May Mother always watch over you too, Father!
I'll be leaving Shi in your care!
I won't forgive you if you make her cry!
Leave her to me!
Father, good luck!

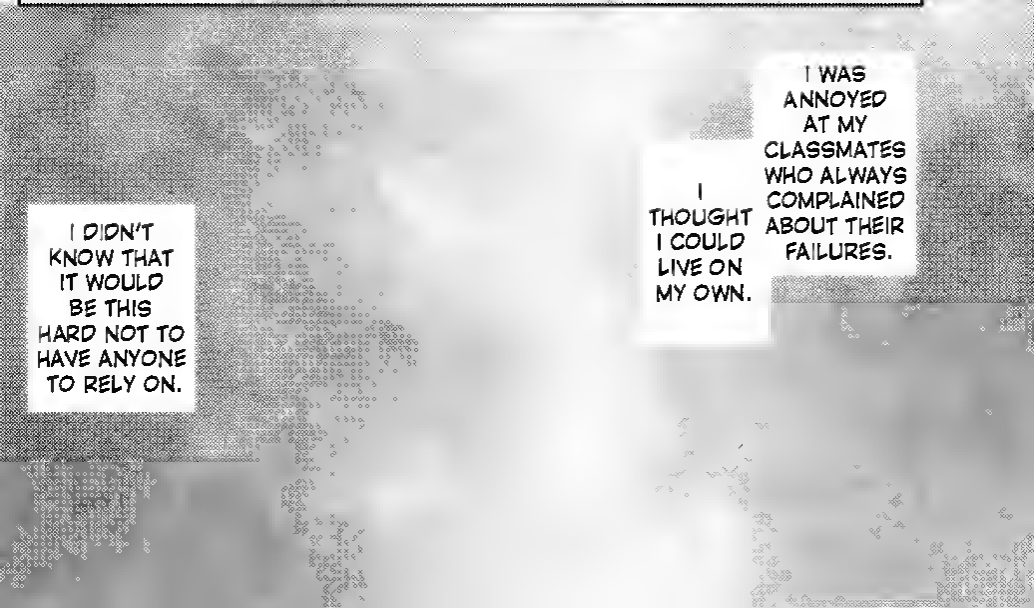
He's a good father.
He's the best father.
I AM A DIVA.
A PRINCESS WHO'S THE BEST SINGER IN THE WORLD.

PRIDE 1

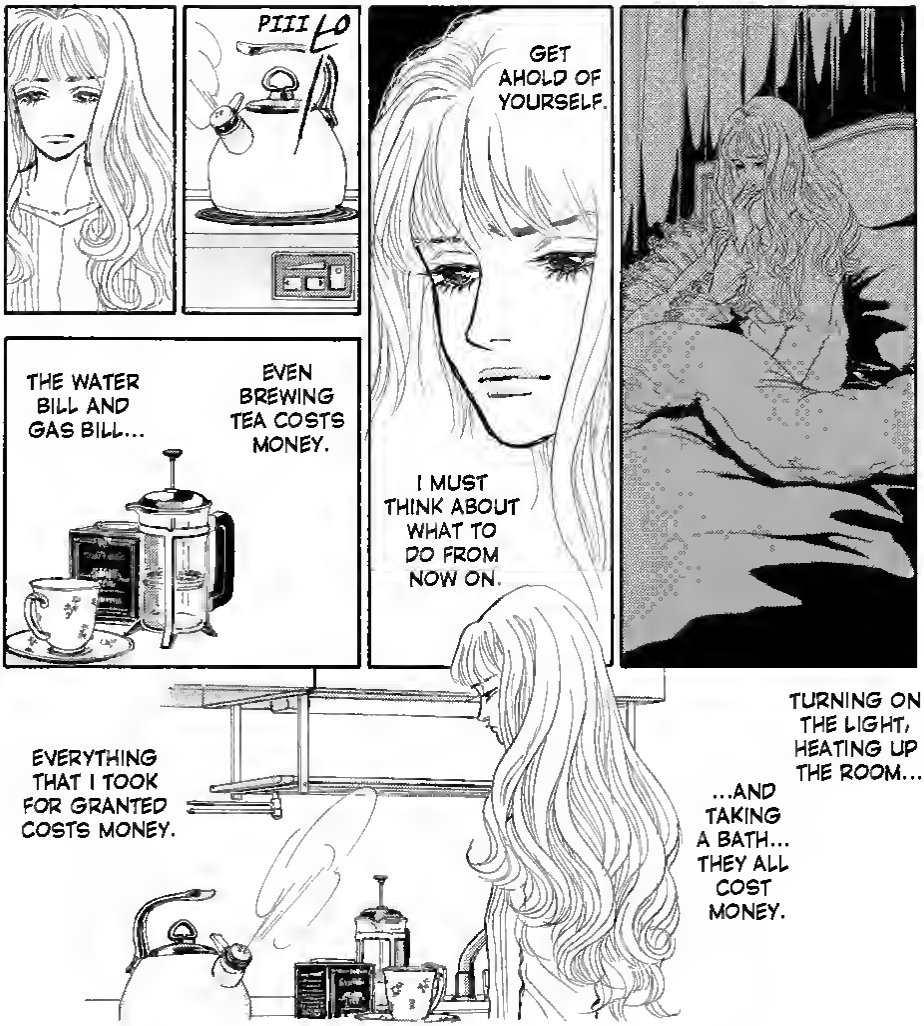

THE ME WHO I THOUGHT WAS STRONG IS GONE.
THE DIVA IS GONE.
THE FATHER WHO PROTECTED ME IS GONE.
THERE ARE MANY THINGS IN THIS WORLD THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE.
NO PARENT, NO MONEY, NOR RELATIVES.
ONE CAN'T SURVIVE...
...SOLELY ON PRIDE.
MOTHER...
MOTHER!
PLEASE TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO!

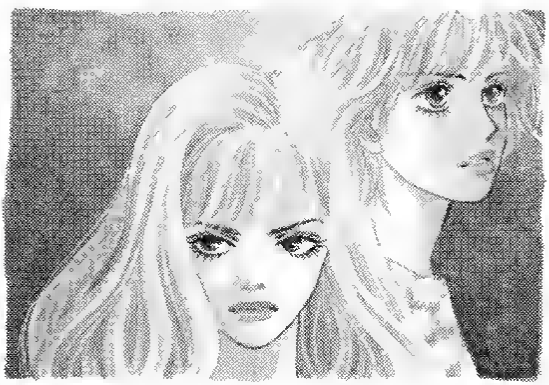

SHIO ASAMI

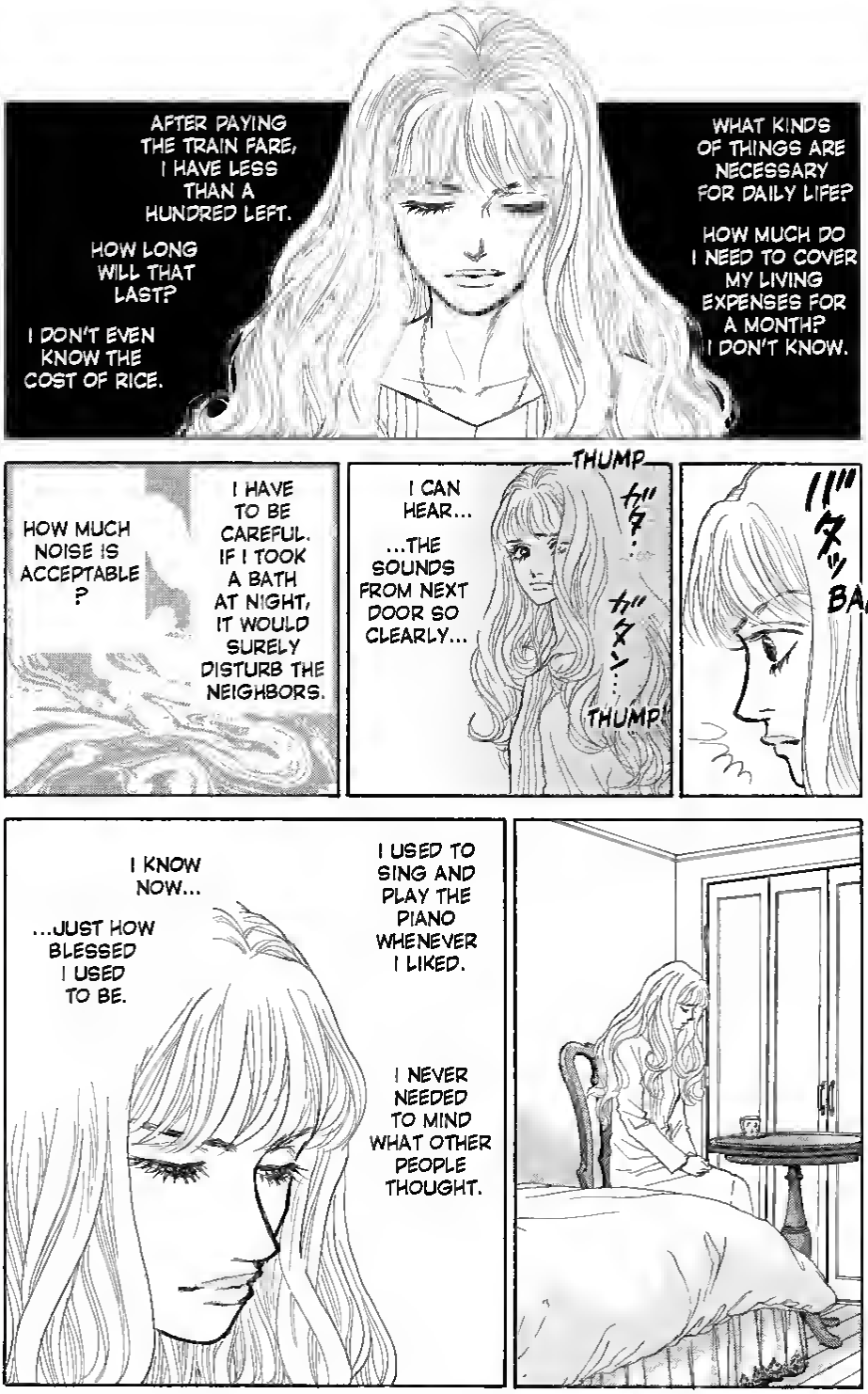

BUT EVEN IF I REGRET IT, NOTHING WILL CHANGE.
AT THAT TIME, WHY DIDN'T I...?
I KEEP ASKING MYSELF THE SAME QUESTION.


I DIDN'T KNOW THAT IT WOULD BE THIS HARD NOT TO HAVE ANYONE TO RELY ON.
I THOUGHT I COULD LIVE ON MY OWN.
I WAS ANNOYED AT MY CLASSMATES WHO ALWAYS COMPLAINED ABOUT THEIR FAILURES.

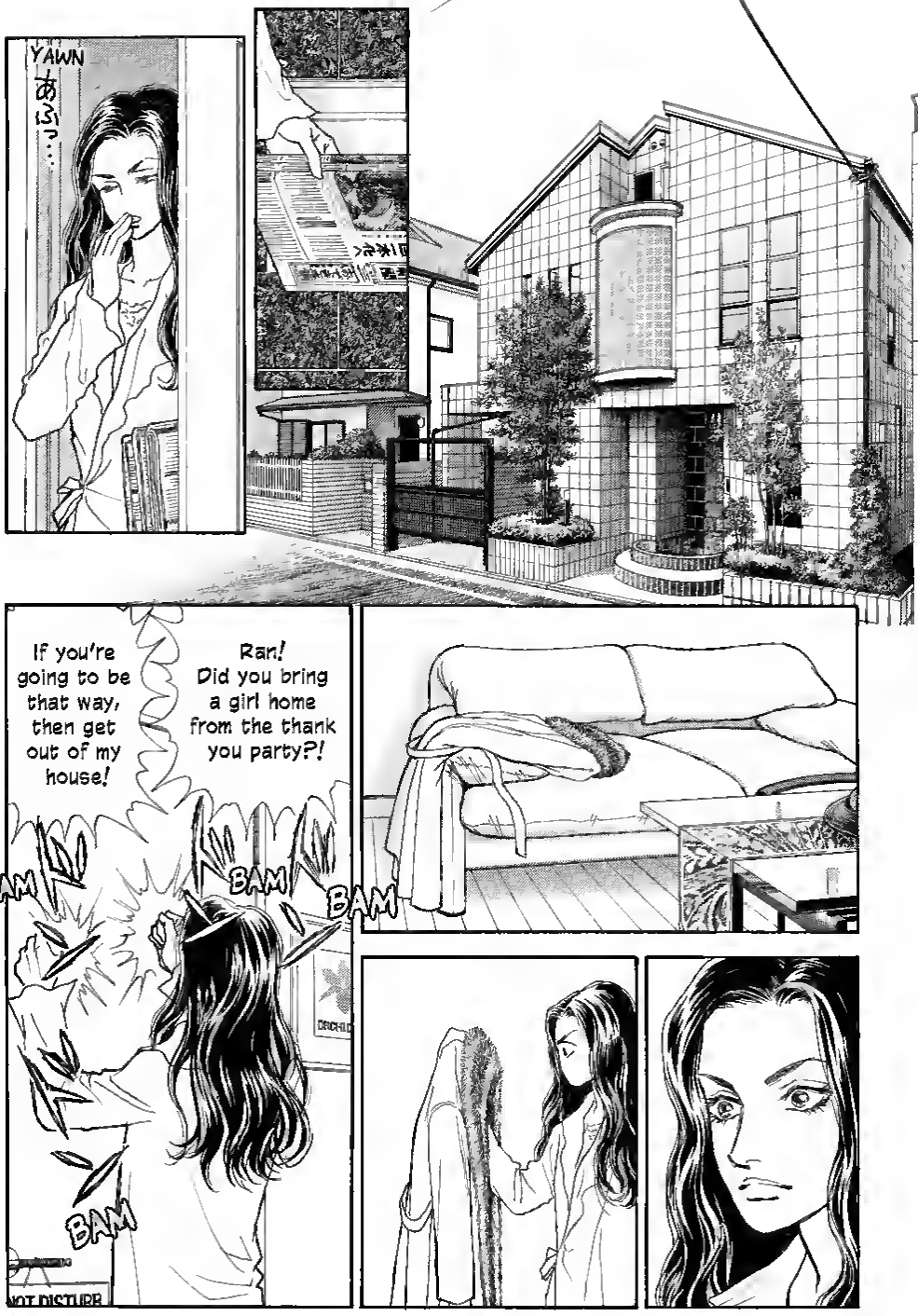
PRIDE 1

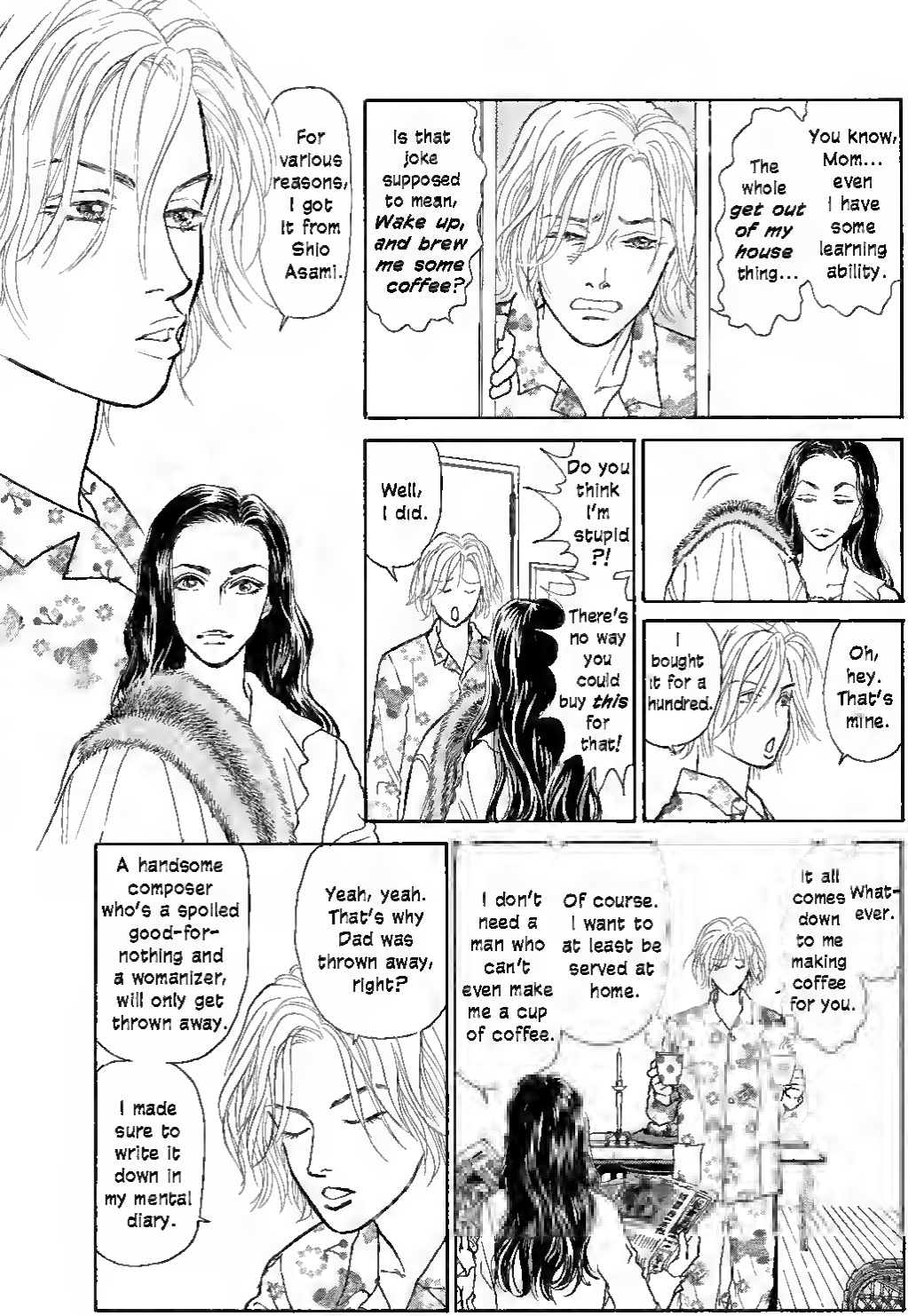

PIII LO
GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF.
THE WATER BILL AND GAS BILL...
EVEN BREWING TEA COSTS MONEY.
I MUST THINK ABOUT WHAT TO DO FROM NOW ON.
EVERYTHING THAT I TOOK FOR GRANTED COSTS MONEY.
TURNING ON THE LIGHT, HEATING UP THE ROOM...
...AND TAKING A BATH... THEY ALL COST MONEY.

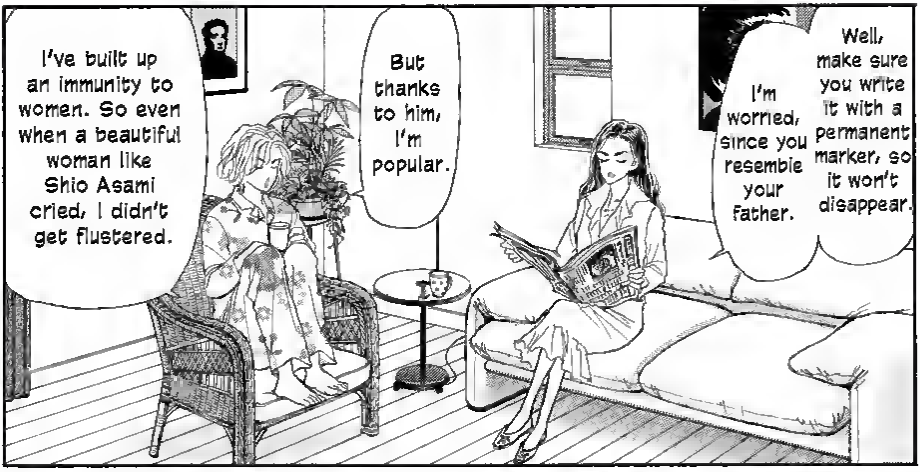


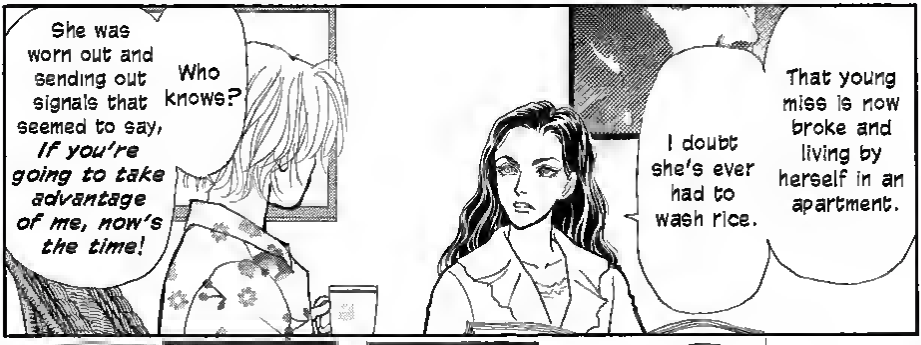

AFTER PAYING THE TRAIN FARE, I HAVE LESS THAN A HUNDRED LEFT.
HOW LONG WILL THAT LAST?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE COST OF RICE.
WHAT KINDS OF THINGS ARE NECESSARY FOR DAILY LIFE?
HOW MUCH DO I NEED TO COVER MY LIVING EXPENSES FOR A MONTH?
I DON'T KNOW.
HOW MUCH NOISE IS ACCEPTABLE?
I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL. IF I TOOK A BATH AT NIGHT, IT WOULD SURELY DISTURB THE NEIGHBORS.
I CAN HEAR...
...THE SOUNDS FROM NEXT DOOR SO CLEARLY...
THUMP
THUMP!
BAM
I KNOW NOW...
...JUST HOW BLESSED I USED TO BE.
I USED TO SING AND PLAY THE PIANO WHENEVER I LIKED.
I NEVER NEEDED TO MIND WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THOUGHT.

I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT.
I CAN'T STOP REMEMBERING.
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE THIS MISERABLE LIFE!
TOMORROW SCARES ME.
SOMEBODY! ANYBODY! PLEASE SAVE ME!
TAKE ME AWAY FROM THIS PLACE!
I CAN'T LIVE ON MY OWN!

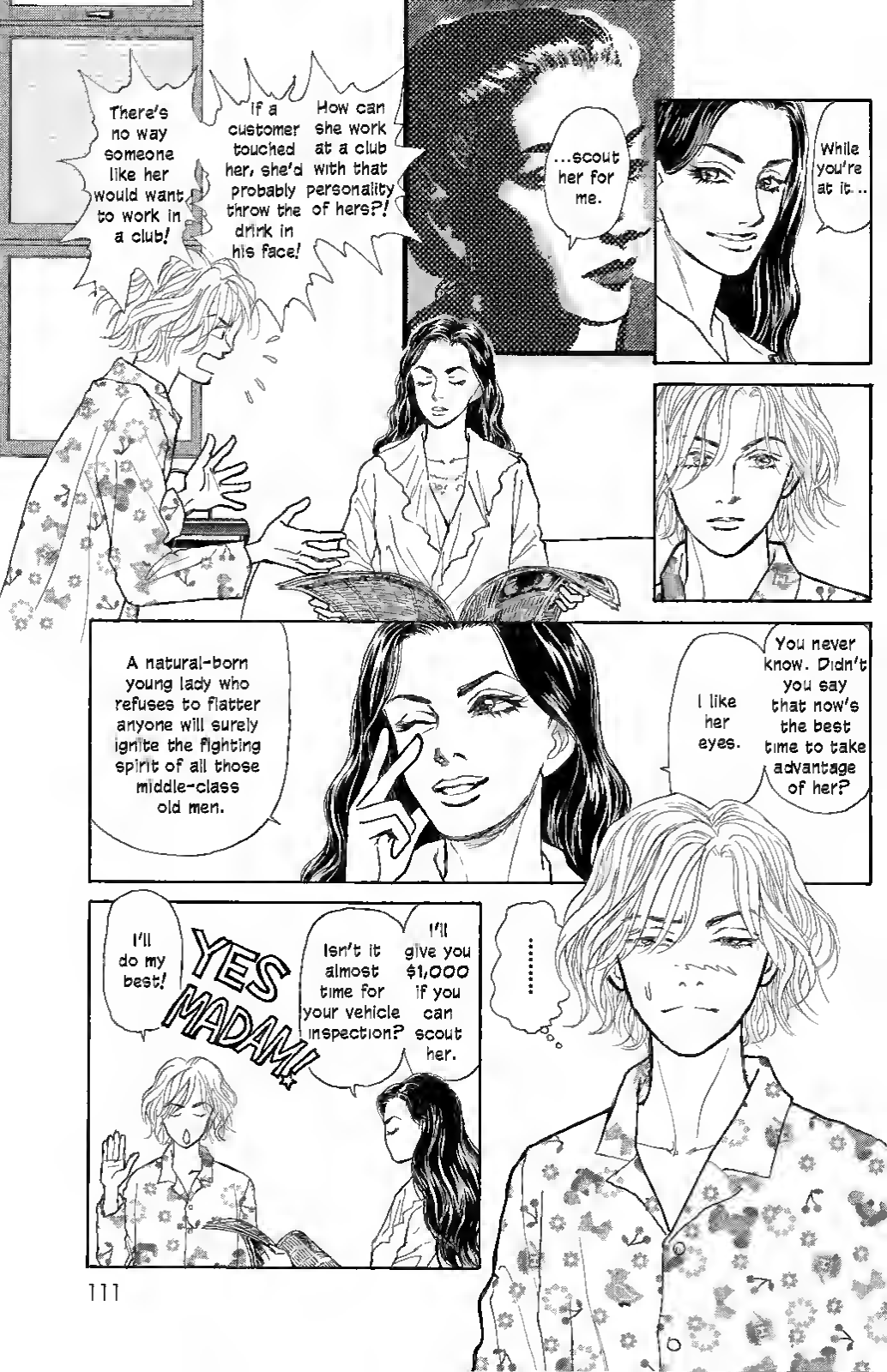

YAWN
あふっ…
Ran! Did you bring a girl home from the thank you party?!
If you're going to be that way, then get out of my house!
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
DO NOT DISTURB

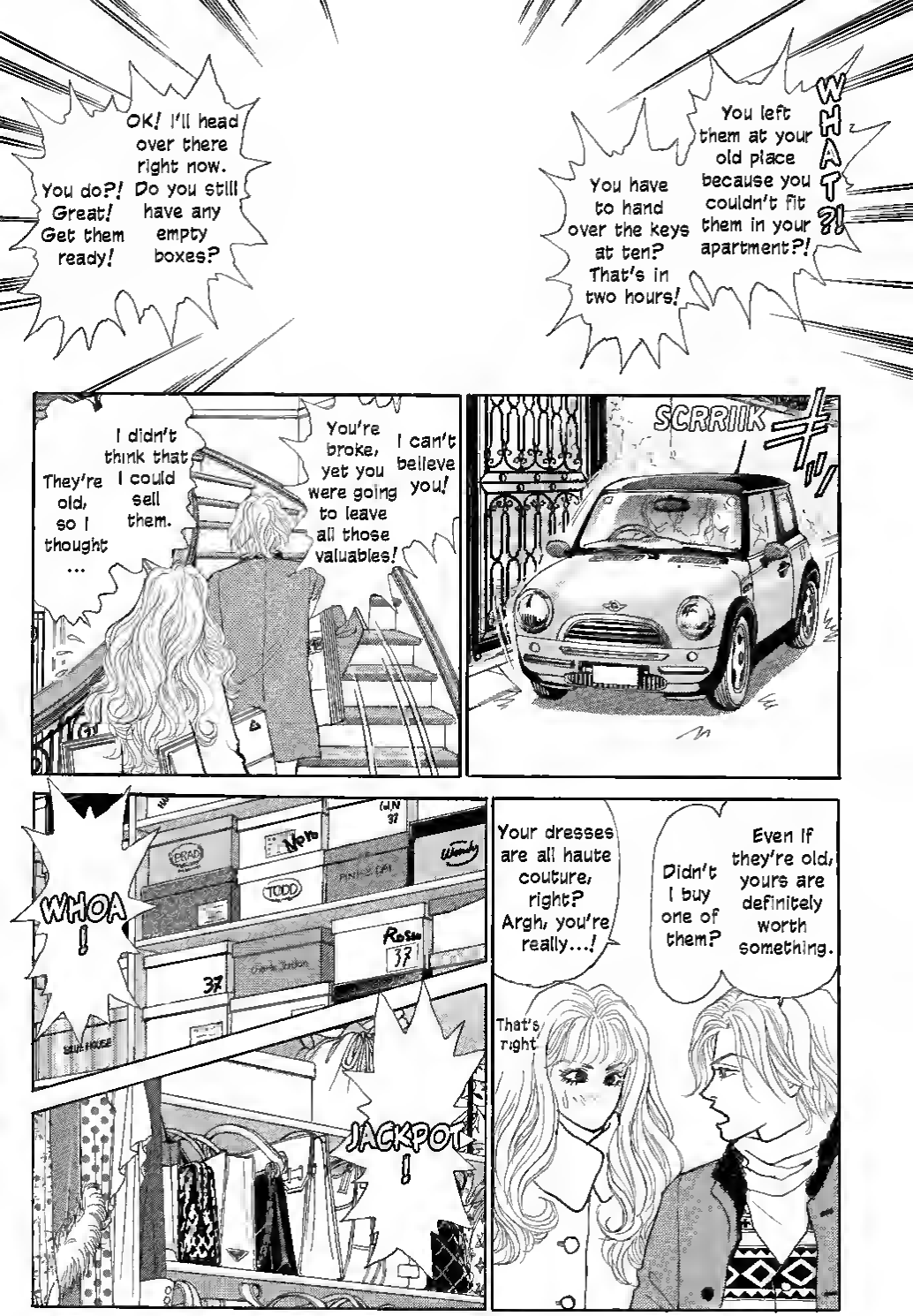

For various reasons, I got it from Shio Asami.
Is that joke supposed to mean, *Wake up, and brew me some coffee?*
You know, Mom... even I have some learning ability.
The whole *get out of my house* thing...
Do you think I'm stupid?!
Well, I did.
There's no way you could buy *this* for that!
I bought it for a hundred.
Oh, hey. That's mine.
A handsome composer who's a spoiled good-for-nothing and a womanizer, will only get thrown away.
Yeah, yeah. That's why Dad was thrown away, right?
I made sure to write it down in my mental diary.
I don't need a man who can't even make me a cup of coffee.
Of course. I want to at least be served at home.
It all comes down to me making coffee for you.
Whatever.


I've built up an immunity to women. So even when a beautiful woman like Shio Asami cried, I didn't get flustered.
But thanks to him, I'm popular.
I'm worried, since you resemble your father.
Well, make sure you write it with a permanent marker, so it won't disappear.


She was worn out and sending out signals that seemed to say, *If you're going to take advantage of me, now's the time!*
Who knows?
I doubt she's ever had to wash rice.
That young miss is now broke and living by herself in an apartment.

I doubt she even knows that they can be sold for a lot of money.
Maybe I should help her sell them, since I promised her dad that I'd help her.
Her shoes and purses are probably all brand name items as well. I wonder if she threw them away.
She must have a lot of expensive dresses.

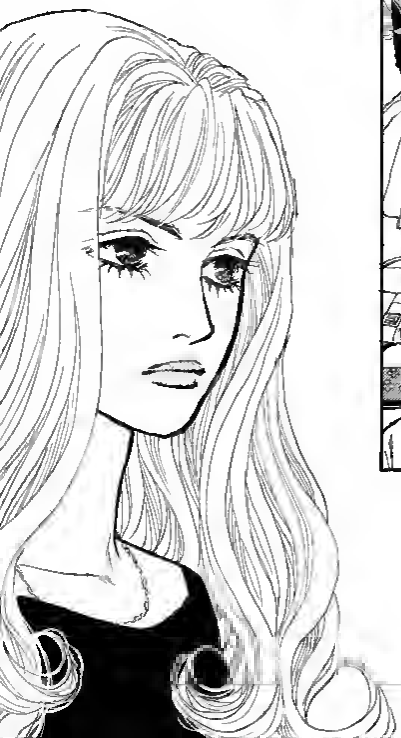

There's no way someone like her would want to work in a club!
If a customer touched her, she'd probably throw the drink in his face!
How can she work at a club with that personality of hers?!
...scout her for me.
While you're at it...
A natural-born young lady who refuses to flatter anyone will surely ignite the fighting spirit of all those middle-class old men.
I like her eyes.
You never know. Didn't you say that now's the best time to take advantage of her?
I'll do my best!
YES MADAM!
Isn't it almost time for your vehicle inspection?
I'll give you $1,000 if you can scout her.
.....

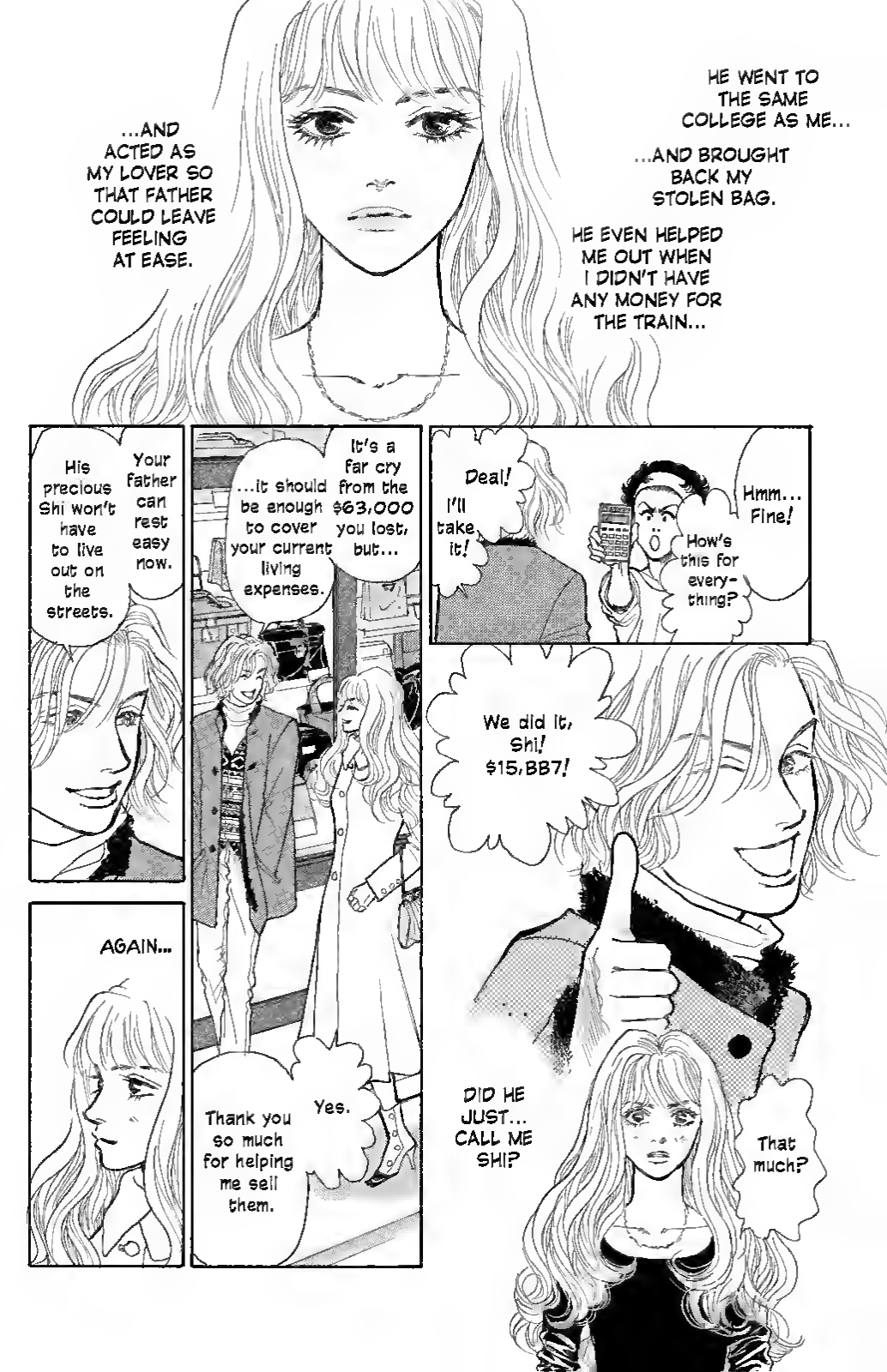

WHAT?!
You left them at your old place because you couldn't fit them in your apartment?!
You have to hand over the keys at ten? That's in two hours!
OK! I'll head over there right now. Do you still have any empty boxes?
You do?! Great! Get them ready!
I can't believe you!
You're broke, yet you were going to leave all those valuables!
I didn't think that I could sell them.
They're old, so I thought ...
SCRRIIK
Your dresses are all haute couture, right? Argh, you're really...!
Didn't I buy one of them?
Even if they're old, yours are definitely worth something.
That's right.
WHOA!
JACKPOT!

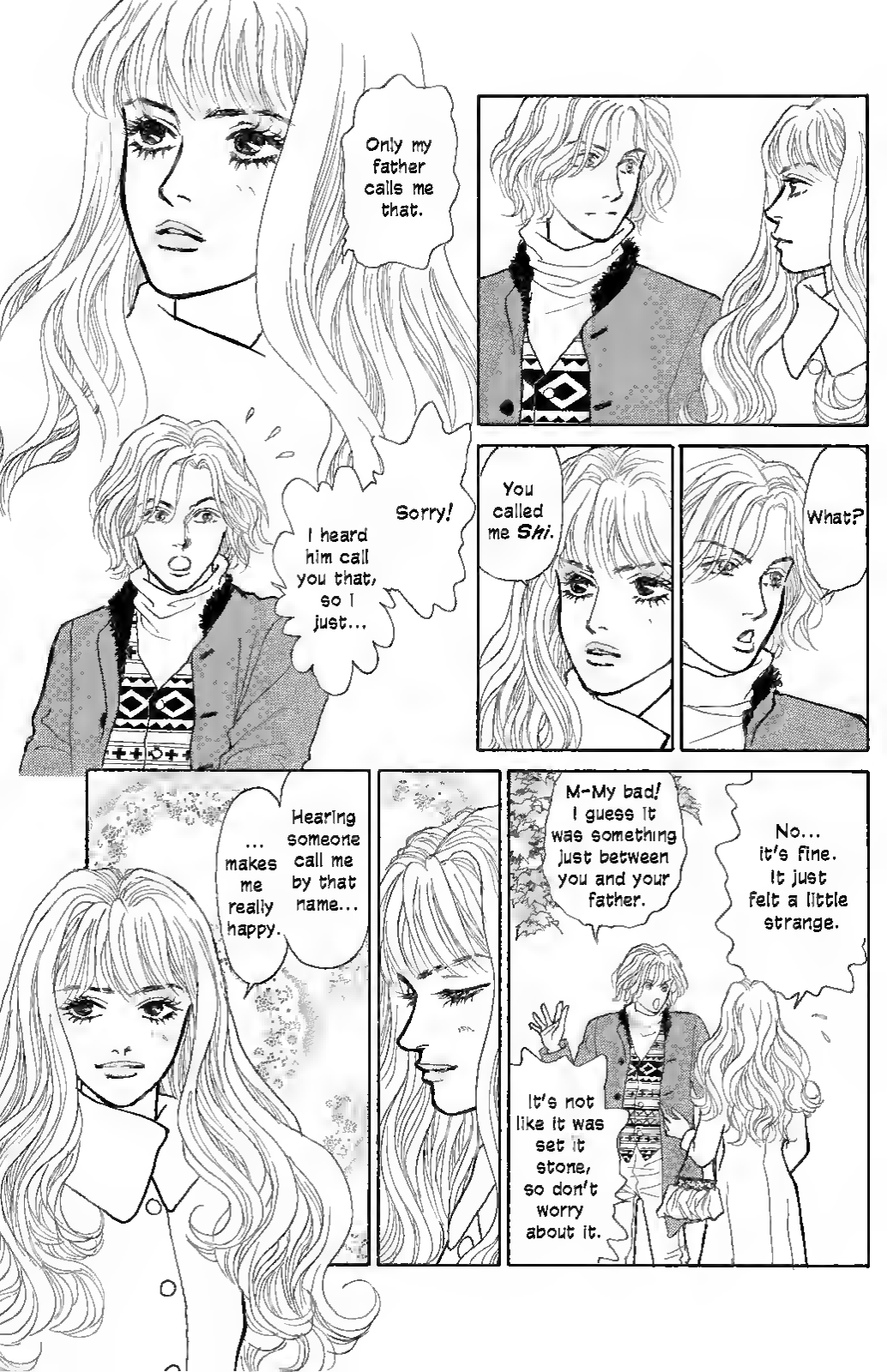
Now I know why all those girls were so jealous of you.
...I'd definitely be feeling like one of those old ladies at a big sale.
If I were a woman...

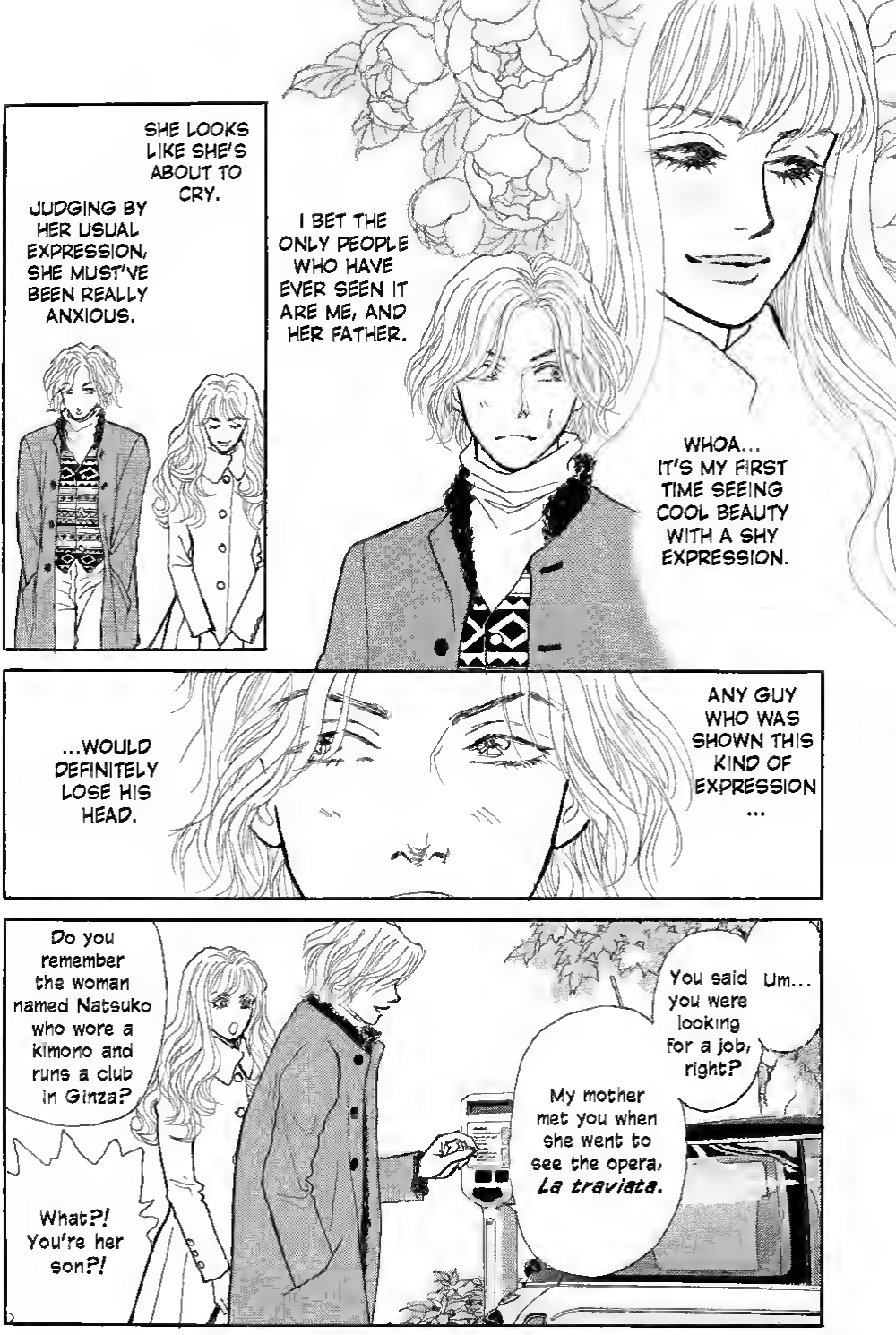
THIS GUY...

WHY IS HE SO NICE TO ME?




...AND ACTED AS MY LOVER SO THAT FATHER COULD LEAVE FEELING AT EASE.
HE WENT TO THE SAME COLLEGE AS ME...
...AND BROUGHT BACK MY STOLEN BAG.
HE EVEN HELPED ME OUT WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY FOR THE TRAIN...
Your father can rest easy now.
His precious Shi won't have to live out on the streets.
It's a far cry from the $63,000 you lost, but...
...it should be enough to cover your current living expenses.
Hmm... Fine!
How's this for every-thing?
Deal! I'll take it!
We did it, Shi! $15,887!
DID HE JUST... CALL ME SHI?
That much?
Yes.
Thank you so much for helping me sell them.
AGAIN...


Only my father calls me that.
Sorry!
I heard him call you that, so I just...
You called me Shi.
What?
M-My bad! I guess it was something just between you and your father.
No... it's fine. It just felt a little strange.
It's not like it was set in stone, so don't worry about it.
Hearing someone call me by that name...
... makes me really happy.


SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ABOUT TO CRY.
JUDGING BY HER USUAL EXPRESSION, SHE MUST'VE BEEN REALLY ANXIOUS.
I BET THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO HAVE EVER SEEN IT ARE ME, AND HER FATHER.
WHOA... IT'S MY FIRST TIME SEEING COOL BEAUTY WITH A SHY EXPRESSION.
...WOULD DEFINITELY LOSE HIS HEAD.
ANY GUY WHO WAS SHOWN THIS KIND OF EXPRESSION ...
Do you remember the woman named Natsuko who wore a kimono and runs a club in Ginza?
What?! You're her son?!
Um...
You said you were looking for a job, right?
My mother met you when she went to see the opera, *La traviata*.

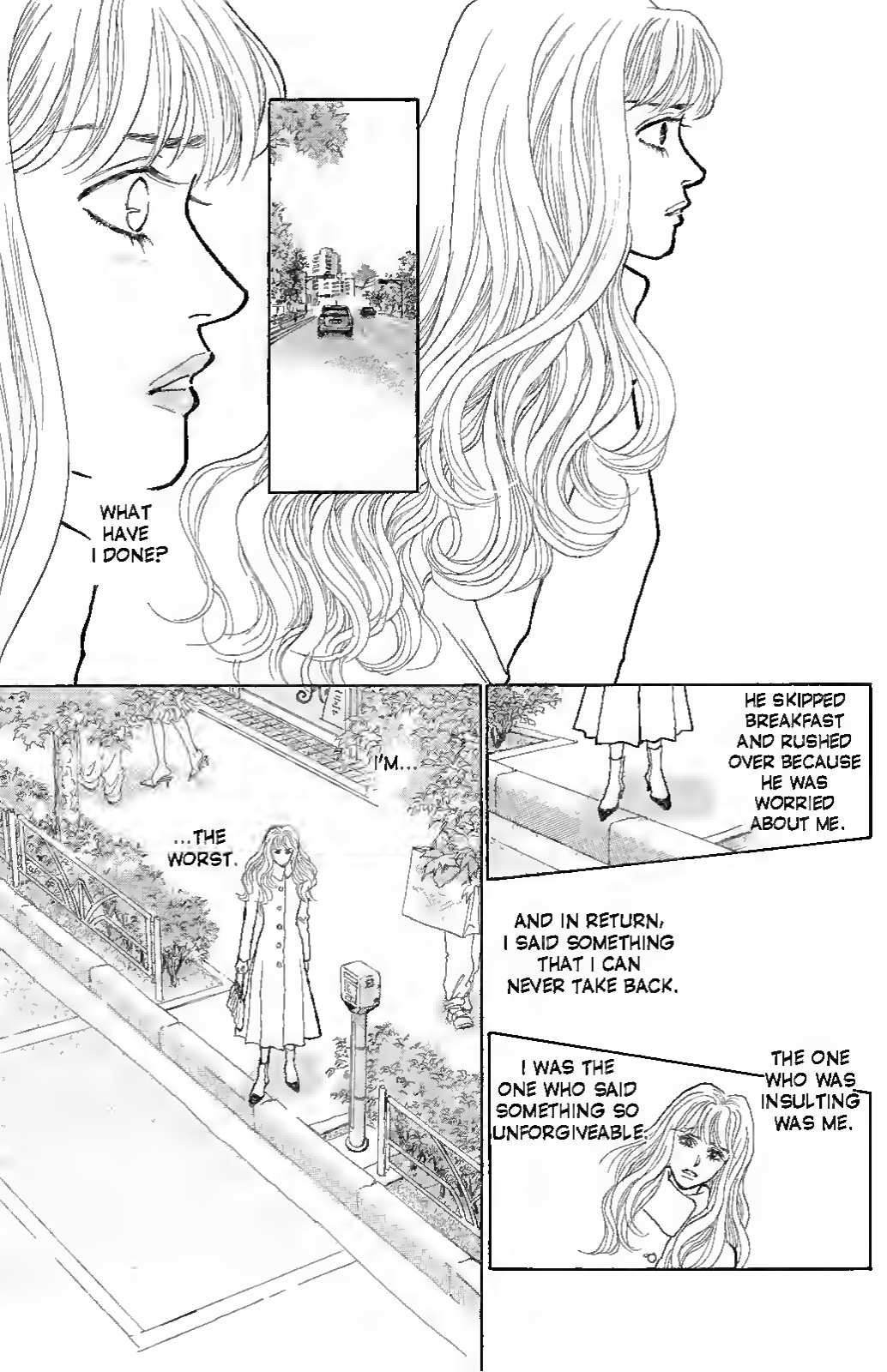
Part-time...
...as a hostess?
I take after my good-for-nothing dad.
You don't look alike.
My mom wanted me to scout you since you caught her eye.
If you don't want to, just say so...
Want to work there part-time until you find another job?
Are you asking me to work as a hostess?
I see. So that's what this was about.
The pay is high, too.
Yeah, well... even as a hostess, it's a pretty upscale place.

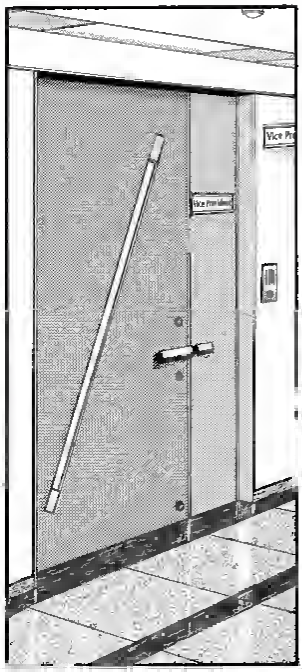
What are you talking about? That's not...
I thought it was strange. Why were you being so nice to me?
I feel so humiliated.
Do I... look like someone who could be a hostess?
So this was the reason.
No matter how much I'm in need of money, I won't be looked down upon!
I'd never flirt with men just to make money!
I'll give you half of the money earned from selling my things.
I owe you, since I wouldn't have been able to do it without you.
Is that enough? Give me your account number so that I can transfer it to you.

PRIDE 1

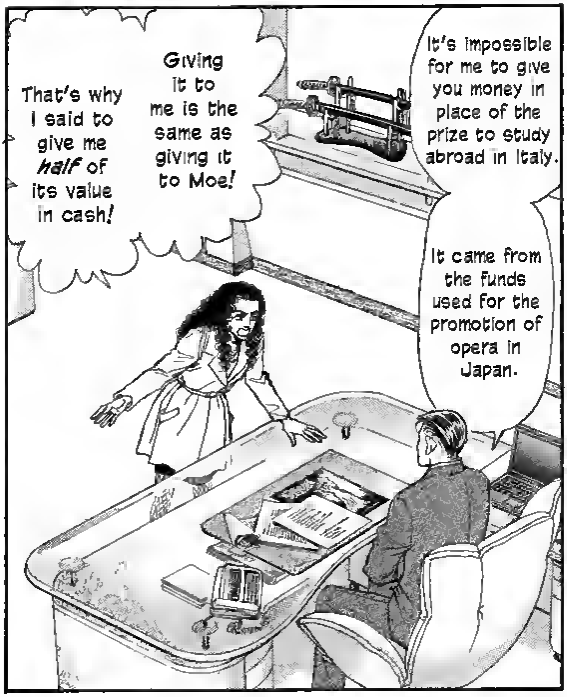
When did I ever say that I wanted money? I even skipped breakfast to rush over here.
I can't believe this!
Is this how you repay someone's kindness?
What?
I came because I was worried about you!
Didn't you hear me?
If you don't want to, just say so!
You're really...
...a horrible woman.
It really pisses me off that I actually thought it was honorable!
Don't go snapping at people with that cheap pride of yours!
The one looking down upon others is you!

Even if my mom's job is humiliating ...
...she's a hundred times better than you as a woman.
It was her idea to sell your old things.
She was also worried that you might not know how to wash rice.
VROOM
You'd rather hang on to your pride, even if it means ending up dying as a beggar!
Sorry for not minding my own business.
You hate being pitied, right?
Then have a nice life alone with that demonic pride of yours!
SLAM
Bitch!
VROOM

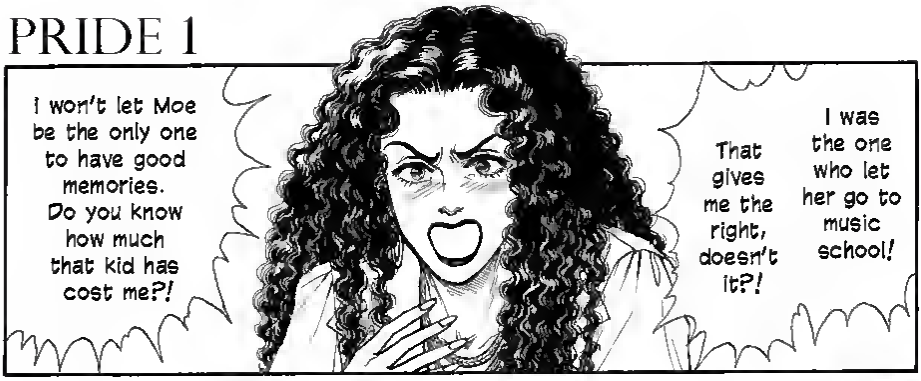

WHAT HAVE I DONE?
I'M...
...THE WORST.
HE SKIPPED BREAKFAST AND RUSHED OVER BECAUSE HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT ME.
AND IN RETURN, I SAID SOMETHING THAT I CAN NEVER TAKE BACK.
I WAS THE ONE WHO SAID SOMETHING SO UNFORGIVEABLE.
THE ONE WHO WAS INSULTING WAS ME.



Queen Record
Queen Record
クィーンレコード


That's why I said to give me *half* of its value in cash!
Giving it to me is the same as giving it to Moe!
It's impossible for me to give you money in place of the prize to study abroad in Italy.
It came from the funds used for the promotion of opera in Japan.

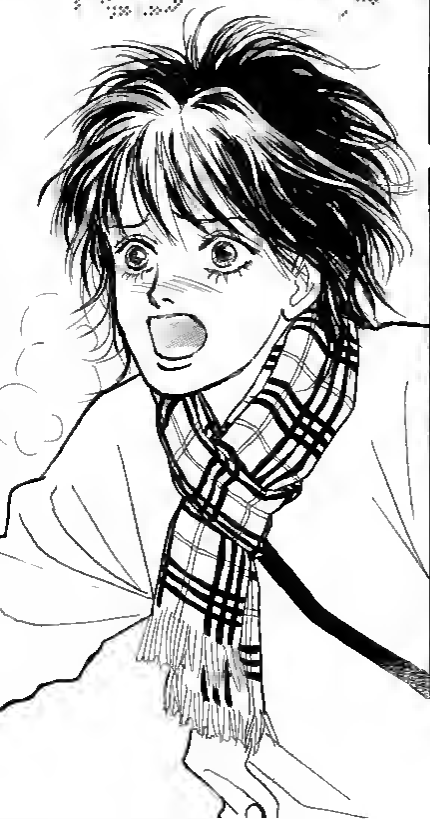
PRIDE 1


I won't let Moe be the only one to have good memories. Do you know how much that kid has cost me?!
That gives me the right, doesn't it?!
I was the one who let her go to music school!

That woman's recently been obsessed with a host.
After that, Tami went to Queen Record and demanded the prize money for your study abroad in Italy.

I drank with my own money, so it's none of your business!
You shouldn't drink in the middle of the day.

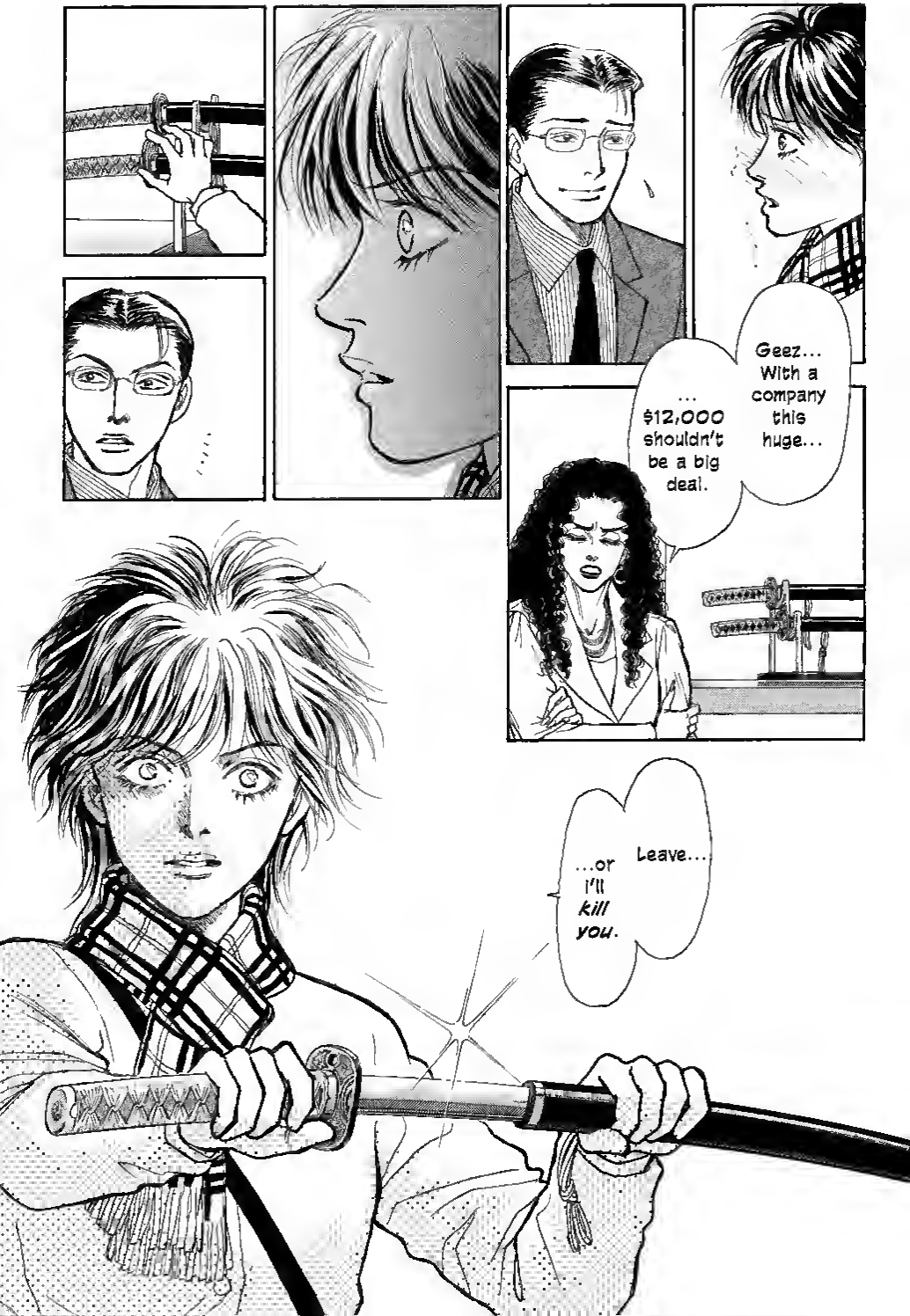
FUMES



Sorry, Moe.
I didn't know it was a secret.
It was mentioned in a book and I let it slip.

I'm begging you! Go home!
Stop it, Mom.
HUFF
HUFF HUFF
MOM!
Shameless? I'm just asking for what's mine.
Come on, Moe. Tell him.
I kept asking this guy, but he's so cheap!
Stop it! How can you be so shameless?!
What?! I'm just here to take the money you won.
I'll leave as soon as I get it.

PRIDE 1

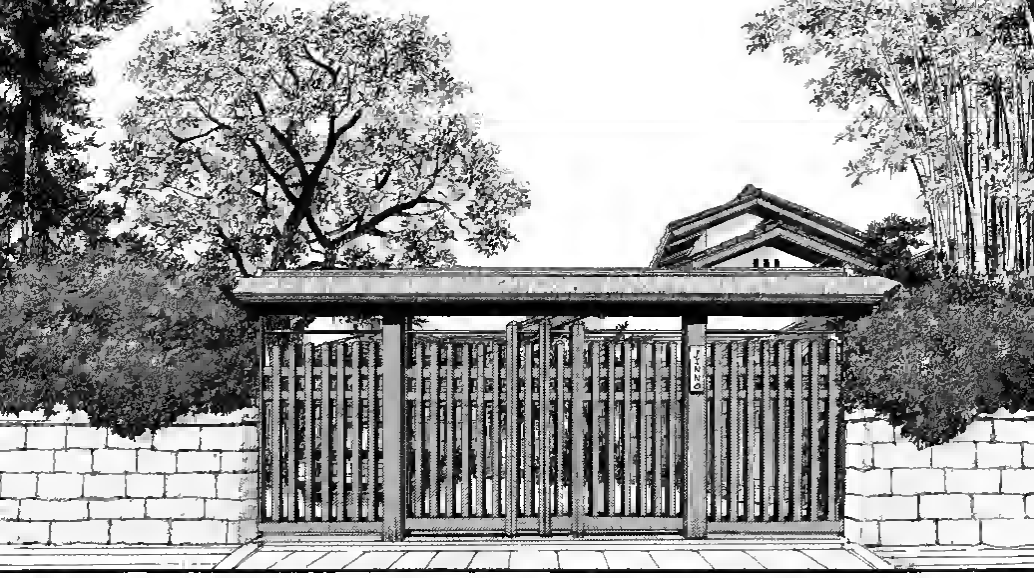

Geez... With a company this huge...
... $12,000 shouldn't be a big deal.
Leave...
...or I'll *kill you*.

You're acting strange!
H-Hey, Moe!
That's dangerous!
I'm sick and tired of you.
I should've done this sooner.
So what?
I don't need a mother who gets in the way of her daughter's dreams!
I-I'm your mother!
If you kill me, it's parenticide!

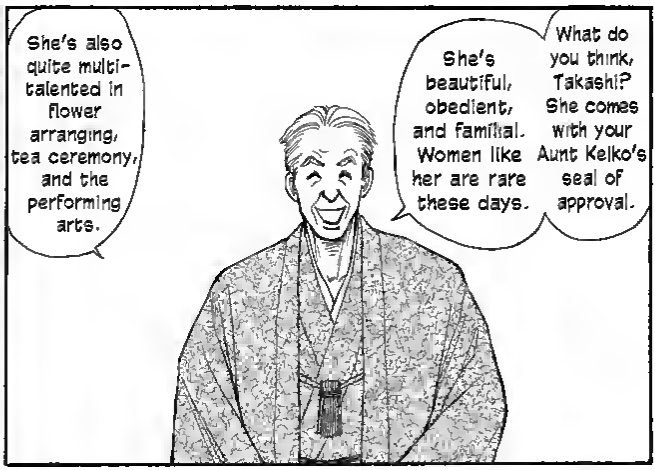
It's none of my business if you want to kill her...
...but it'll cause problems if you do it here.
NOOO!
I have a meeting after this, so please take this.
Let's stop it here.
HUFF
HUFF
Moe! Don't even think about coming back!
How dare you threaten to kill your own parent! You're a horrible child!
H-Hmph! I guess I have no choice!

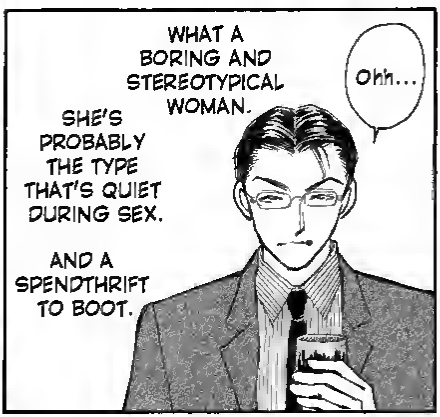
HIC
HIC ラッ!
HIC ラッ!
ひっ!
SOB
CLATTER
You went too far.
PAT
M-Mr. Jinno...
Mr. Jinno!
I beg you! Please don't abandon me!
I don't have parents anymore!
I'm all alone!
I-I'll do anything!
Anything! Whatever you want!

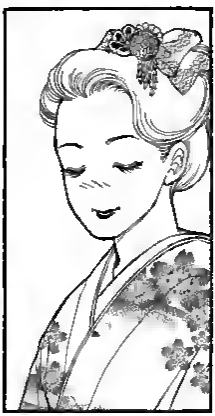
Save me!
Please! You have to save me!
Yes, Sir.
Please book a hotel room for Miss Moe Midorikawa.
Yes. The one for our employees. She'll be staying there for a while.
PHEW, WHAT A SCENE...


JINNO

What was with your behavior, Takashi?!
Is Ohh and I see all you can say?!
ううー


She's also quite multi-talented in flower arranging, tea ceremony, and the performing arts.
She's beautiful, obedient, and familial. Women like her are rare these days.
What do you think, Takashi? She comes with your Aunt Keiko's seal of approval.


WHAT A BORING AND STEREOTYPICAL WOMAN.
Ohh...
SHE'S PROBABLY THE TYPE THAT'S QUIET DURING SEX.
AND A SPENDTHRIFT TO BOOT.



If there's a woman you like, then just make her a mistress.
Your wife must be someone acceptable to the public.
What would be so enjoyable about taking that type of woman as a wife?
I want to at least be able to choose who I want to marry.

He'll be 20 soon.
Then make your mistress's son get married.

Your mother is also looking forward to it.
Isn't it about time for you to settle down and give me a grandchild?

How about a *wedding and promotion to company president ceremony?*
I'll switch my title of president with you anytime.

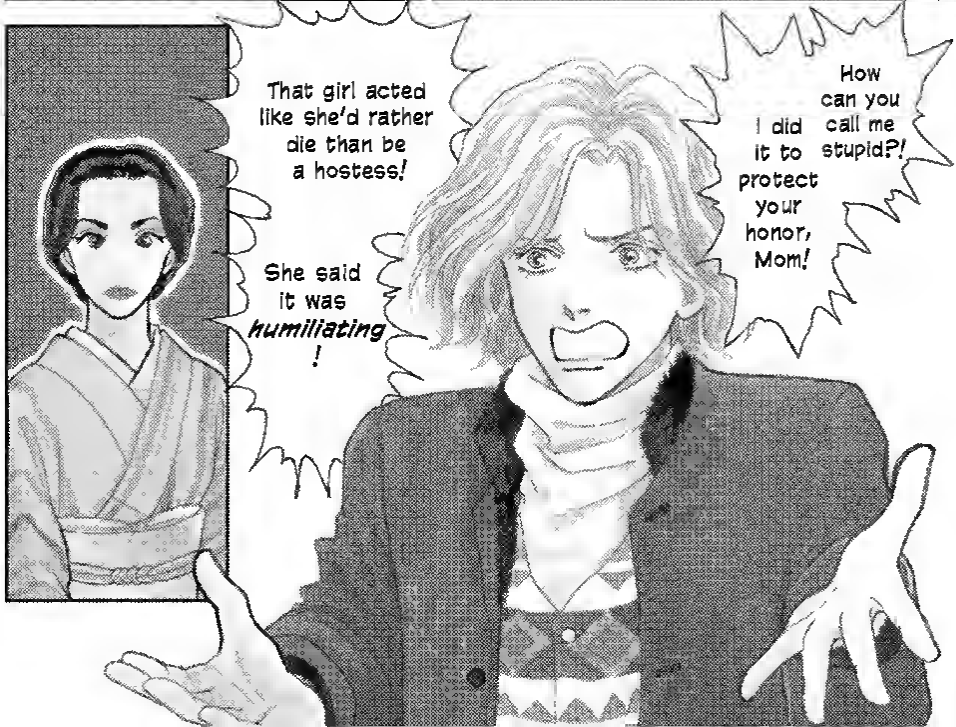
Yes, yes. I'll give it some thought, so please don't call me out for something like this again.
I'm so busy because you keep playing around.
I'll take the baby everywhere with me and spoil him rotten!
I want to hold the legitimate grandson of the Jinno family.

A WOMAN WHO COULD BECOME THE MISTRESS OF THIS HOUSE...
FOR ONE THING, IT CAN'T BE SOMEONE WHO'S WEAK.
GET MARRIED, HUH.
I SUPPOSE IT'S ABOUT TIME.
RATTLE ガラ ガラ
!!! ダダッ!
SLAM
I WONDER IF THAT EARRING WAS HERS...
Thank you very much.
GETTING INVOLVED WITH A FEMALE EMPLOYEE...
NO. MR. JINNO WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD CAUSE HIM TROUBLE.
HOTEL 西急ホテル NISHIKYUU
If you need anything, please contact me.
I wonder if you remember me.
I am Mr. Jinno's secretary, Arimori.

MR. JINNO...
SIGH
THE ONE THING I NEVER WANTED TO DO... I DID TO HIM...
IF IT WAS ME, I WOULD NEVER FORGIVE THE OTHER PERSON.
I WOULD NEVER FORGIVE SOMEONE WHO INSULTED MY BELOVED MOTHER!
Bitch!
You'd rather hang on to your pride, even if it means ending up dying as a beggar!

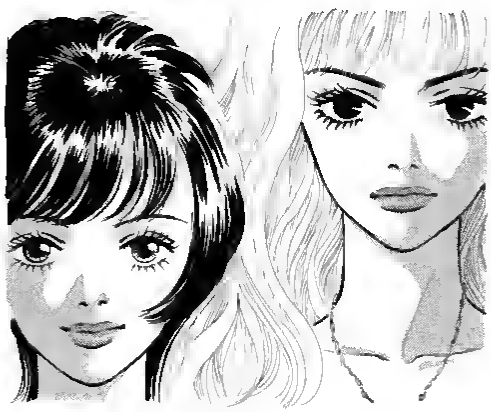
...and got into a fight?
You went to scout her...

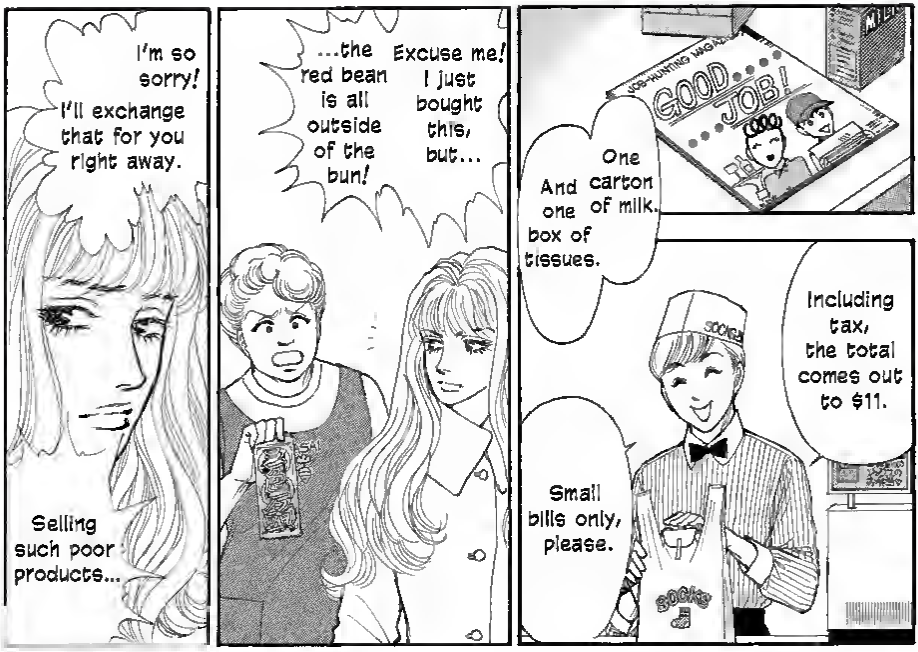
Are you stupid?

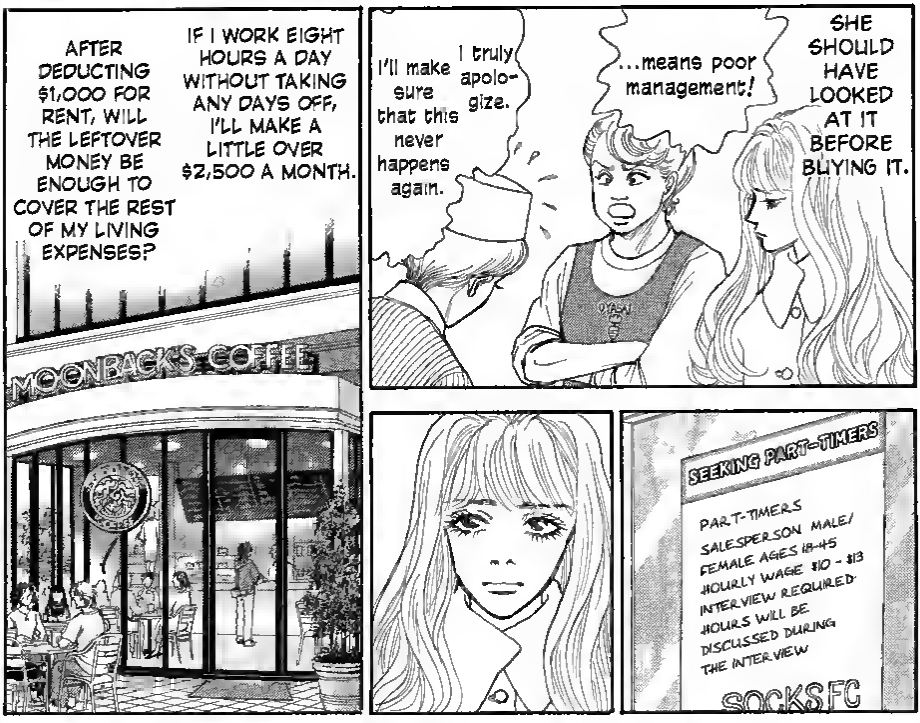

That girl acted like she'd rather die than be a hostess!
She said it was *humiliating*!
I did it to protect your honor, Mom!
How can you call me stupid?!

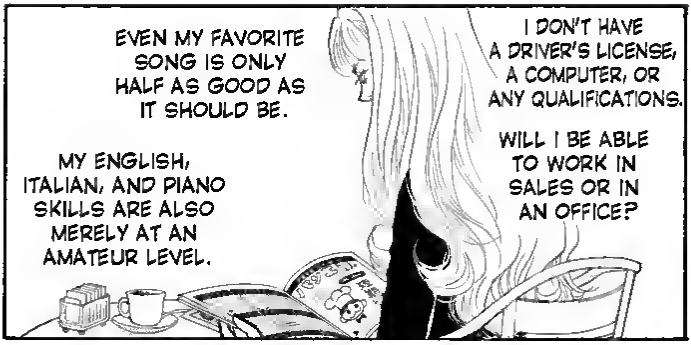
PRIDE 1

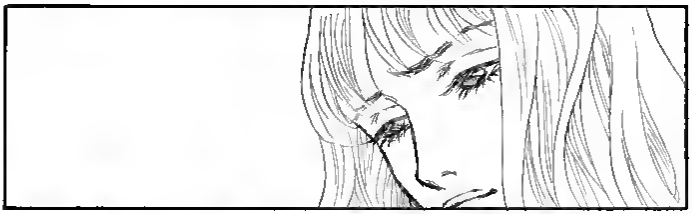
CLANK
CLANK
NO WAY...
It's natural to be afraid of what you don't know.
I was the daughter of a long-established family, you know.
I used to think that being a hostess was the same thing as being a prostitute.
CLANK
CLANK
CLANK
CLANK
That girl probably never imagined that she'd have to work.
I wonder how she'll change once she's forced to.
Since I used to be like her, I'm interested to find out.
EST HEIGHTS



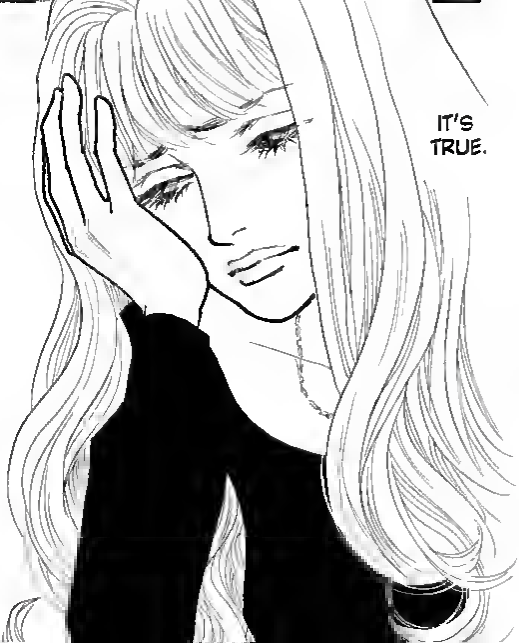

I'm so sorry! I'll exchange that for you right away.
Selling such poor products...
Excuse me! I just bought this, but...
...the red bean is all outside of the bun!
GOOD JOB!
One carton of milk.
And one box of tissues.
Including tax, the total comes out to $11.
Small bills only, please.


AFTER DEDUCTING $1,000 FOR RENT, WILL THE LEFTOVER MONEY BE ENOUGH TO COVER THE REST OF MY LIVING EXPENSES?
IF I WORK EIGHT HOURS A DAY WITHOUT TAKING ANY DAYS OFF, I'LL MAKE A LITTLE OVER $2,500 A MONTH.
MOONBACKS COFFEE
I'll make sure that this never happens again.
I truly apologize.
...means poor management!
SHE SHOULD HAVE LOOKED AT IT BEFORE BUYING IT.
SEEKING PART-TIMERS
PART-TIMERS
SALESPERSON MALE/FEMALE AGES 18-45
HOURLY WAGE $10 - $13
INTERVIEW REQUIRED
HOURS WILL BE DISCUSSED DURING THE INTERVIEW
SOCKSFC


I DON'T HAVE A DRIVER'S LICENSE, A COMPUTER, OR ANY QUALIFICATIONS.
WILL I BE ABLE TO WORK IN SALES OR IN AN OFFICE?
EVEN MY FAVORITE SONG IS ONLY HALF AS GOOD AS IT SHOULD BE.
MY ENGLISH, ITALIAN, AND PIANO SKILLS ARE ALSO MERELY AT AN AMATEUR LEVEL.



I...
BUT, HOW?
Your high sense of pride worries me, Miss Asami.
...HAVE TO FIND A JOB.

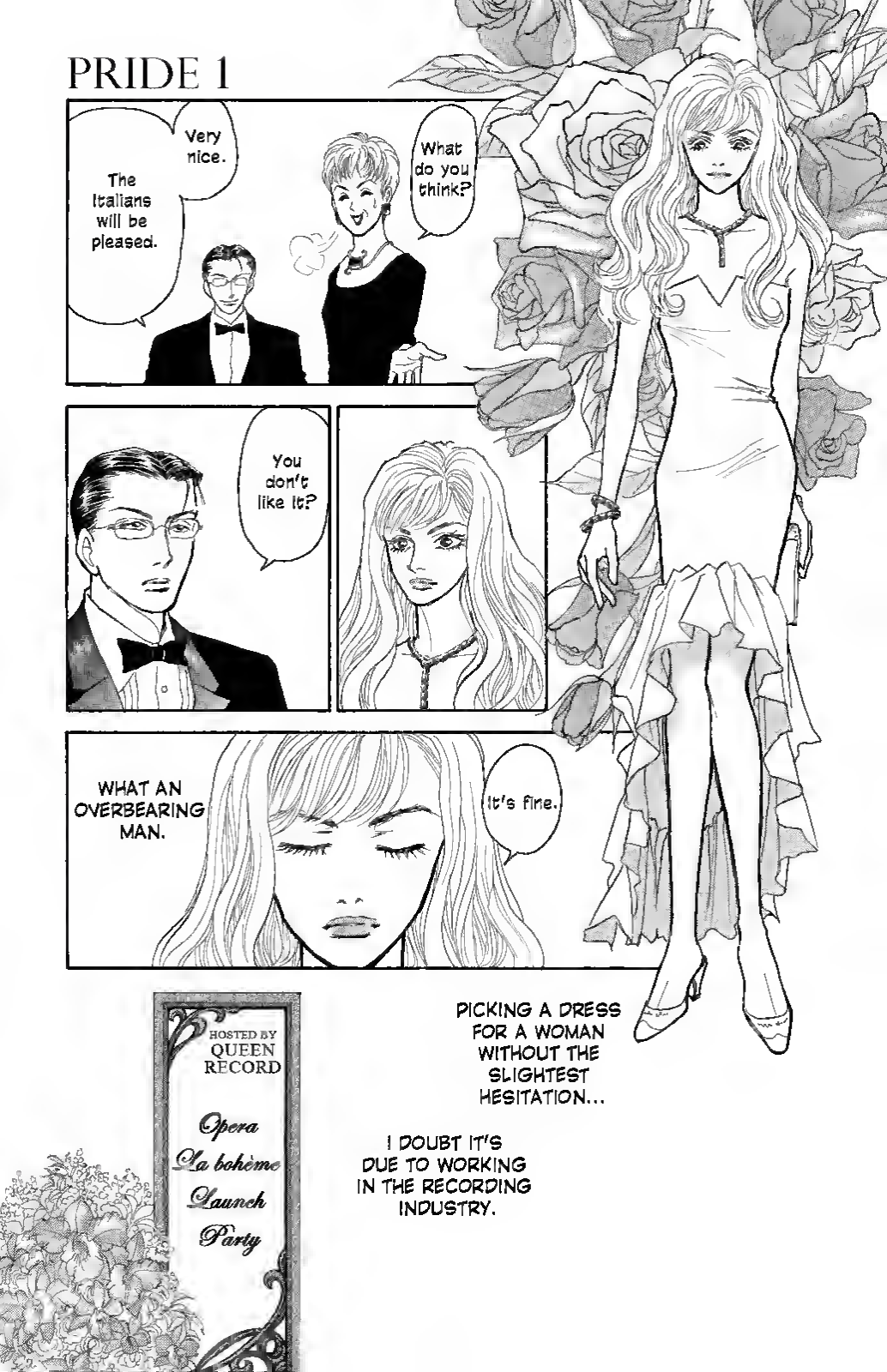

I HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED YET...
IT'S TRUE.
...BUT I ALREADY FEEL DISCOURAGED.

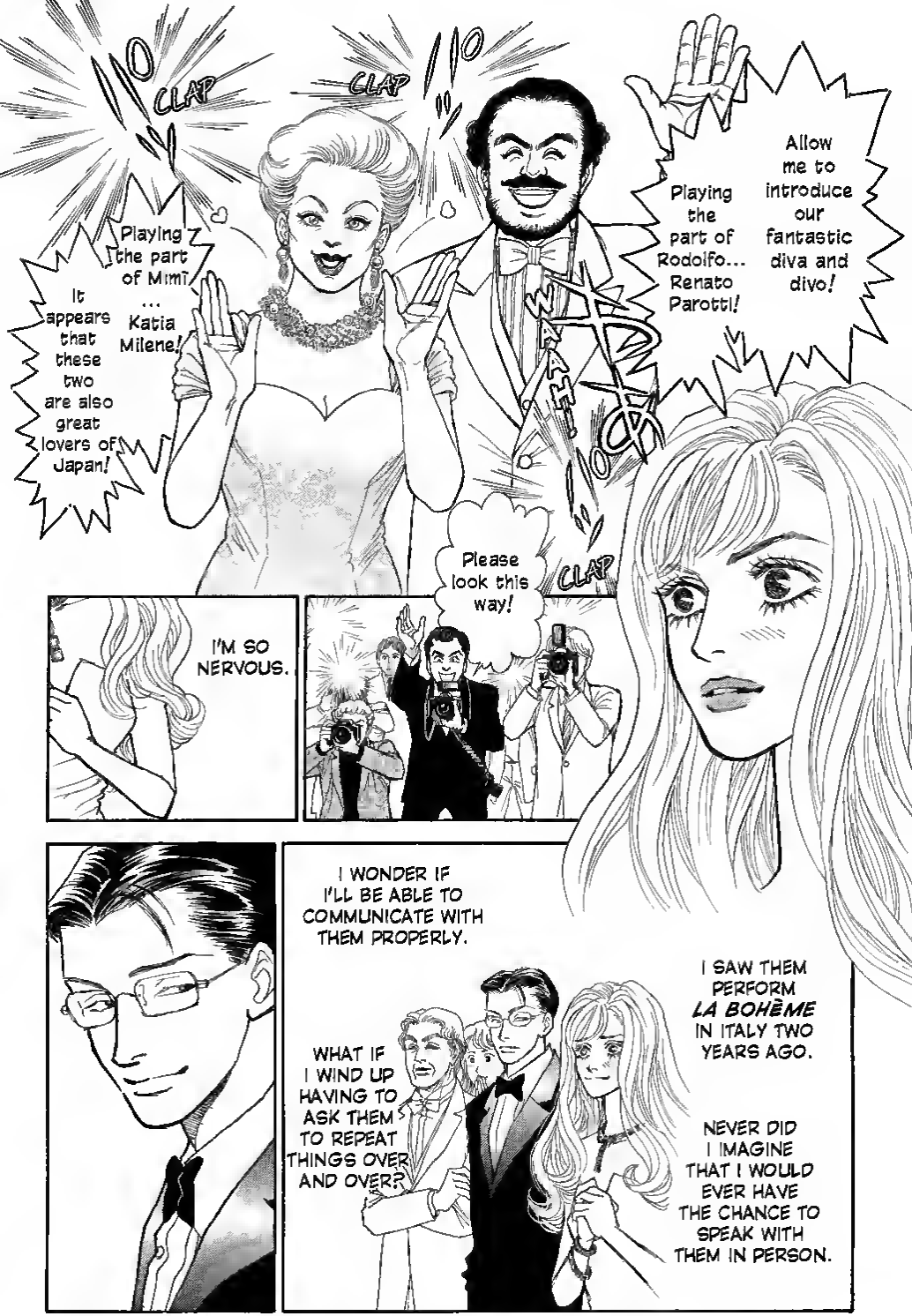
So I thought of you, Shio.
It was supposed to be me, but I have to attend a funeral in Shikoku tomorrow.
Conversational Italian is fine.
We need someone who knows opera.
I'm grateful for your offer, but I don't think my Italian is good enough.
What? Translator?
Yes. Madame Matsushima?
He also agreed that you'd be a great choice.
Do you remember Mr. Jinno from Queen Record?
Parotti and Milene have come from Italy.
We're hosting a launch party for the summer performance of La bohème.
110
CLACK
I'll do it! Thank you for this opportunity!
There'll also be a professional translator present, so don't worry.

I GOT A JOB!
I'M SO HAPPY!
AND IT INVOLVES OPERA!
HOTEL ROYAL NIKKEIKO
It's nice to meet you again. My name is Shio Asami.
Though my Italian is still on an amateur level, I will do my best.
You're too plain.

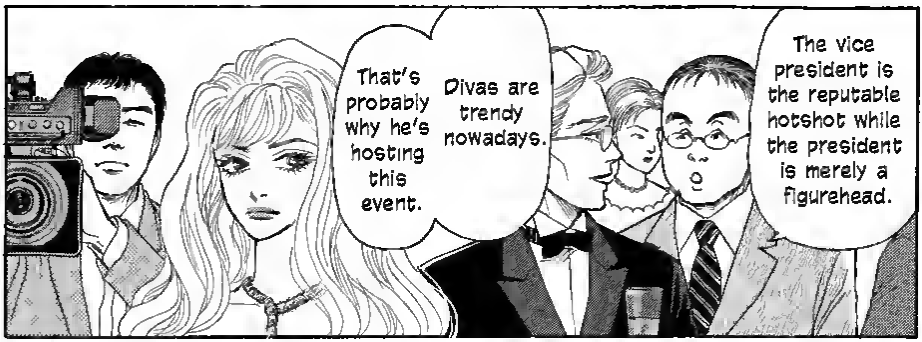
You have to change clothes.
I refuse to bring you to the party looking like a student at a job interview.
What?
I thought it would be best to dress conservatively.
I don't have that kind of time. Let's head to the stores below.
Even if I were to hurry, it would take around an hour and a half.
You want me to change my clothes?
CHARGE IT AS USUAL...
DOES HE DO THIS OFTEN?
TAP
TAP
Please have her ready in twenty minutes. Charge it as usual.
Come this way
Of course, Mr. Jinno.
The accessories can be rented.
For a purse, this will do.
That dress and those shoes.
GRACE
We also have a makeup artist, who can...

PRIDE 1

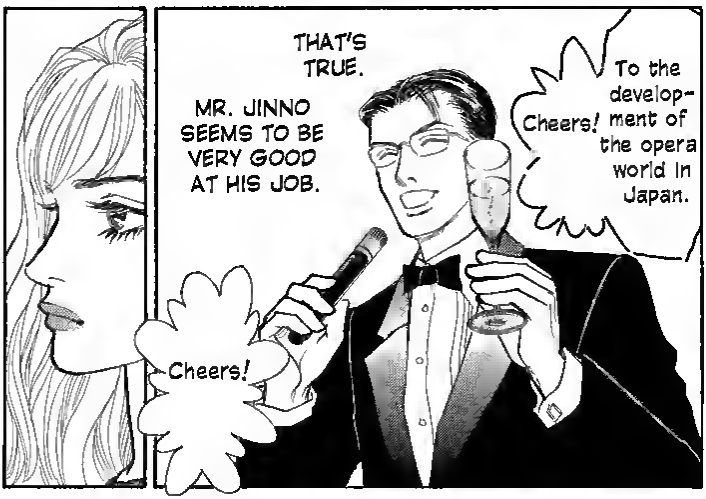

Very nice.
The Italians will be pleased.
What do you think?
You don't like it?
It's fine.
WHAT AN OVERBEARING MAN.
HOSTED BY QUEEN RECORD
Opera La bohème Launch Party
PICKING A DRESS FOR A WOMAN WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST HESITATION...
I DOUBT IT'S DUE TO WORKING IN THE RECORDING INDUSTRY.


CLAP
CLAP
Allow me to introduce our fantastic diva and divo!
Playing the part of Rodolfo... Renato Parotti!
Playing the part of Mimi ... Katia Milene!
It appears that these two are also great lovers of Japan!
FLASH
CLAP
Please look this way!
I'M SO NERVOUS.
I WONDER IF I'LL BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM PROPERLY.
I SAW THEM PERFORM *LA BOHÈME* IN ITALY TWO YEARS AGO.
WHAT IF I WIND UP HAVING TO ASK THEM TO REPEAT THINGS OVER AND OVER?
NEVER DID I IMAGINE THAT I WOULD EVER HAVE THE CHANCE TO SPEAK WITH THEM IN PERSON.

I am the vice president of Queen Record, Takashi Jinno.
Our company has been a longtime supporter of classical music.
The now deceased opera singer, Sawako Kihara...
...and the flower of the Japanese opera world, Haruko Matsushima, were both signed by our company.
At Queen Record, we consistently seek to find new talent.


The vice president is the reputable hotshot while the president is merely a figurehead.
Divas are trendy nowadays.
That's probably why he's hosting this event.

THE OPERA WORLD IN JAPAN...



~~~~~
~~~~~
~~~~~
That's marvelous! I believe that Japanese people should learn more about the wonders of opera.
Queen Record has sponsored a competition called *Parco de Opera* to find new young talent.
Y-Yes! Of course!
Well...
The more you know about opera, the happier you become.
Don't you agree, beautiful miss?
.....
SHOULD I TRANSLATE WHAT HE JUST SAID?
And here I was happy that such a beautiful young lady was one of the Japanese performers. What a shame.
He asked me whether I agreed that the more you know about opera, the happier you become.
I answered, *Of course!*
~~~~~

Why don't you introduce yourself?
Yes. She is Sawako Kihara's daughter.
Um... Lady?
What ?
CHUCKLE
My name is Shio Asami.
My mother was the opera singer Sawako Kihara, who sang in Italy in the past.
It appears that he thought this woman was one of the Japanese performers because she's very beautiful.
You look exactly like the Sawako I remember.
Sawako's daughter, you said?!
I once performed on the same stage with her!
I remember. Her lyric soprano was entrancing.
Did you know? Sawako was known as *The Canary From the East*.
Instead of translating, you're better at entertaining guests.

THAT'S AMAZING!
TO THINK THAT THEY KNEW MY MOTHER.
Of course! This man was one of her fans.
Was my mother popular?
Who will be able to cage *The Canary*? Everyone was gossiping about it.
I did through college.
But, I hope to continue it as a precious hobby.
Since I love to sing.
Wasn't she a participant in the *Parco de Opera* competition?
She appears to be Sawako Kihara's daughter.
Who is that woman?
What a beauty!
Do you sing opera as well, Shio?

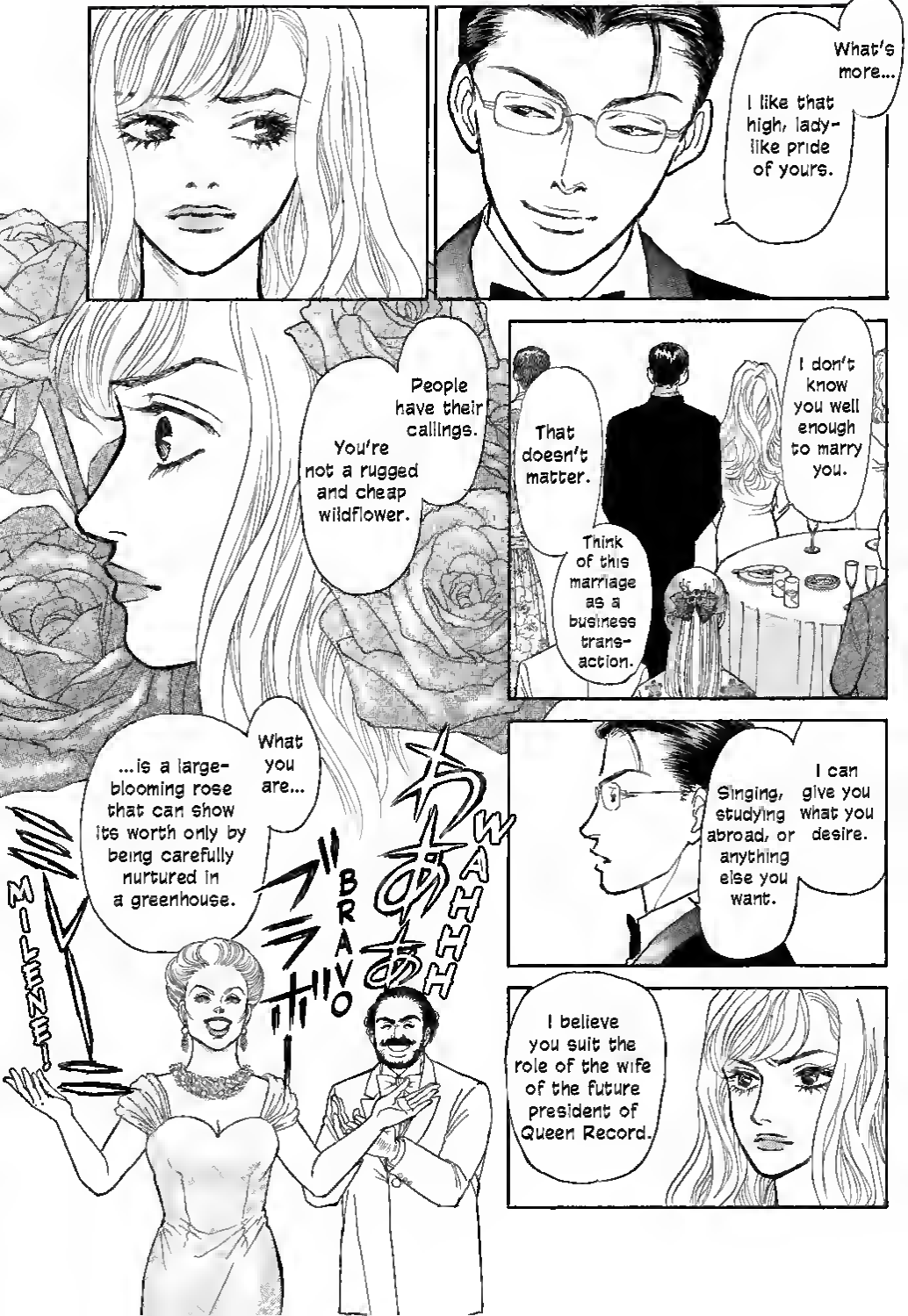
I believe songs are the greatest gift God has given us.
Every time I sing, I give a little back to God.
And when I've repaid it all, my life will have come to its end.
It's a great life.
Yes. Songs are amazing.
When you're happy, they make you happier. When you're sad, they make you forget the pain.
Another song means another step closer to God.
It seems that I am up.
Please enjoy the performances by these two, who are said to possess voices blessed by God.
And also from the first act, Katia Milene shall perform Mi chiamano Mimì.
Renato Parotti shall perform Che gelida manina from the first act of La bohème.
Now for two voices worthy of ending this grand event!
KYAAA
WAHHH

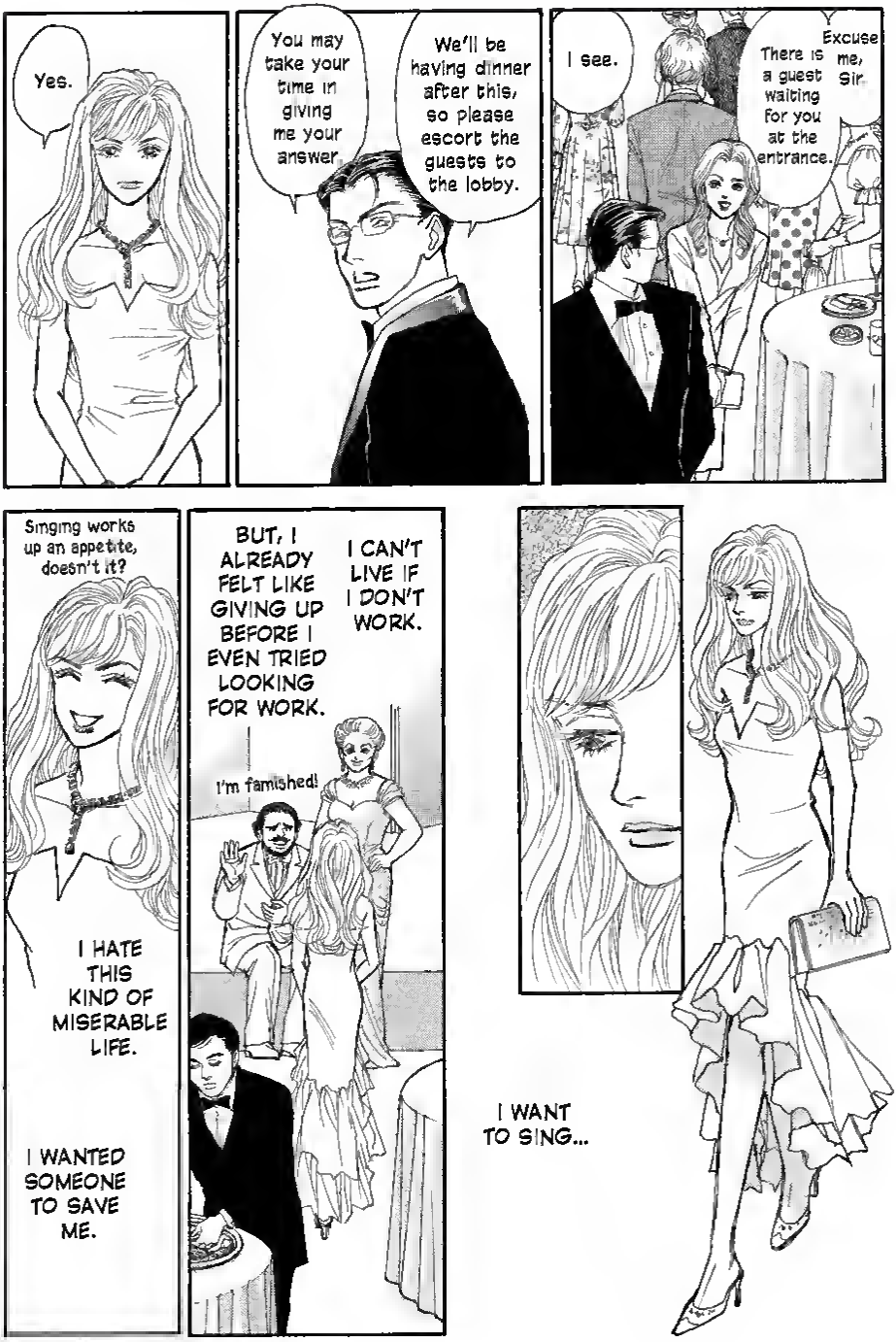
EVEN IN A ROOM WITH SUCH POOR ACOUSTICS AS THIS.
THEY'RE AMAZING.
And when I've repaid it all...
...my life will have come to its end
I believe songs are the greatest gift God has given us.
Every time I sing, I give a little back to God.

WAAHH
Marvel-ous!
Bravo, Parotti!
It's a great life.
MILENE!
MILENE!
WAHHH
...AND ONE DAY BECOME A PROFES-SIONAL OPERA SINGER.
I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED... THAT I WOULD STUDY ABROAD IN ITALY...
I WANT TO SING...

Songs are amazing.
When you're happy, they make you happier.
When you're sad, they make you forget the pain.
You are more suited to living in *this* world.
Not in some rundown apartment.
What would you say to us getting married?
The people around me are becoming a nuisance.
When it comes to marriage, I need someone who can be my match.
You're beautiful and you're Sawako Kihara's daughter.
You have the ability to become the flower of a party with your English and Italian.
You also understand the meaning of shame, so you won't act foolishly.

PRIDE 1


What's more...
I like that high, lady-like pride of yours.
I don't know you well enough to marry you.
That doesn't matter.
Think of this marriage as a business transaction.
People have their callings.
You're not a rugged and cheap wildflower.
What you are...
...is a large-blooming rose that can show its worth only by being carefully nurtured in a greenhouse.
I can give you what you desire.
Singing, studying abroad, or anything else you want.
I believe you suit the role of the wife of the future president of Queen Record.
WAHHHH
BRAVO
ブラボー


Yes.
You may take your time in giving me your answer.
We'll be having dinner after this, so please escort the guests to the lobby.
I see.
There is a guest waiting for you at the entrance.
Excuse me, Sir.
Singing works up an appetite, doesn't it?
I HATE THIS KIND OF MISERABLE LIFE.
I WANTED SOMEONE TO SAVE ME.
BUT, I ALREADY FELT LIKE GIVING UP BEFORE I EVEN TRIED LOOKING FOR WORK.
I CAN'T LIVE IF I DON'T WORK.
I'm famished!
I WANT TO SING...

PRIDE 1

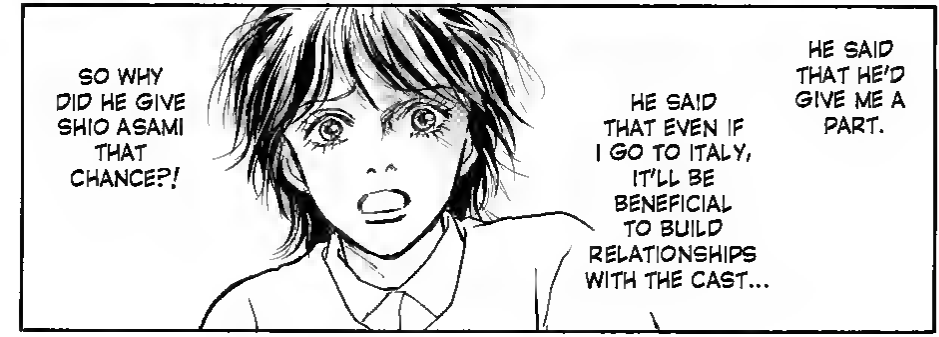
What a nice view!
I NEVER KNEW IT UNTIL NOW.
...IN ORDER TO PROTECT MY PRIDE.
I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT I WAS HURTING OTHERS ...
I'M VAIN...
...AND HELPLESS.
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT THAT I WANT TO PROTECT.

THIS SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR WHEN SCHOOL STARTS.
I CAN ALSO JUST QUIT IF THE GOING GETS TOUGH.
EITHER WAY, I'M NEVER GOING BACK TO THAT HOUSE AGAIN.
BEEP
PHEW
HOTEL 西急ホテル NISHIKYU
...MOM WAS AT WORK AND NOT AT HOME.
THANK GOD...
Awesome! Standing on stage with those two people...
That's Parotti and Milene!
...really means it's the best of the best.
I apologize for my lack of knowledge about opera.
AH!
The protagonists appear to be world famous singers.
We are at the launch party of the Italian opera, *La bohème*.
NO WAY!

But by coincidence, her daughter is at this party acting as their translator.
When they were in Italy, they were close friends with the Japanese opera singer Sawako Kihara!
Actually, there is a reason behind why these two love Japan so much.
She stands out quite a bit at the party.
A true beauty!
This is her, Shio Asami.
Quite the nice pair, don't you think?
WHY...?
...is the vice president of Queen Record, who happens to be single.
And the handsome gentleman by her side...
WHY IS SHIO ASAMI THERE?!

I highly recommend that everyone come and see it at least once.
WHY?!
Still, I was surprised by the force of their voices.
The voices of these two are said to be blessed by God!
WHY, MR. JINNO?!
How they could be heard so clearly throughout the hall without a mike was shocking!
This broadcast was brought to you by Ticket Pipi! ♡
The opera, *La bohème*, is scheduled to be performed at Queen Hall in the beginning of August.

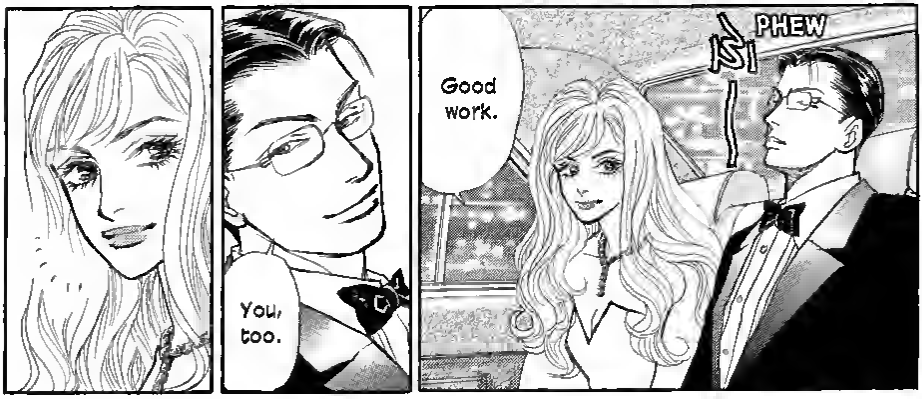
WHY IS SHIO ASAMI THERE INSTEAD OF ME?!
WHY DIDN'T HE TELL ME?!

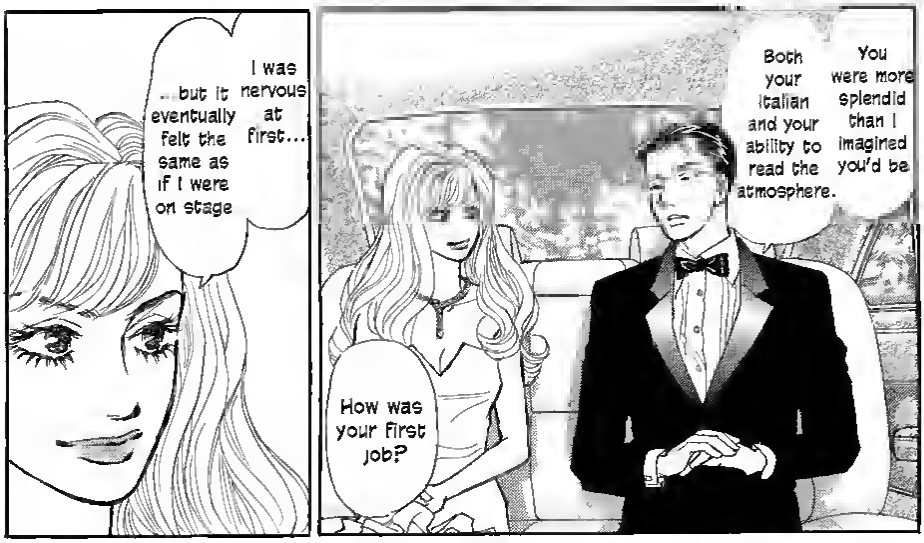

SO WHY DID HE GIVE SHIO ASAMI THAT CHANCE?!
HE SAID THAT EVEN IF I GO TO ITALY, IT'LL BE BENEFICIAL TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CAST...
HE SAID THAT HE'D GIVE ME A PART.

I'VE BEEN TRYING MY HARDEST!
WAS IT STILL NOT ENOUGH?
THEN, WHAT SHOULD I DO?!
IT'S SO FRUSTRATING ...

VROOM

There are other types of Japanese food besides sushi, you know
HA HA
At a sushi restaurant I hope.
Then, we'll see you again in August.

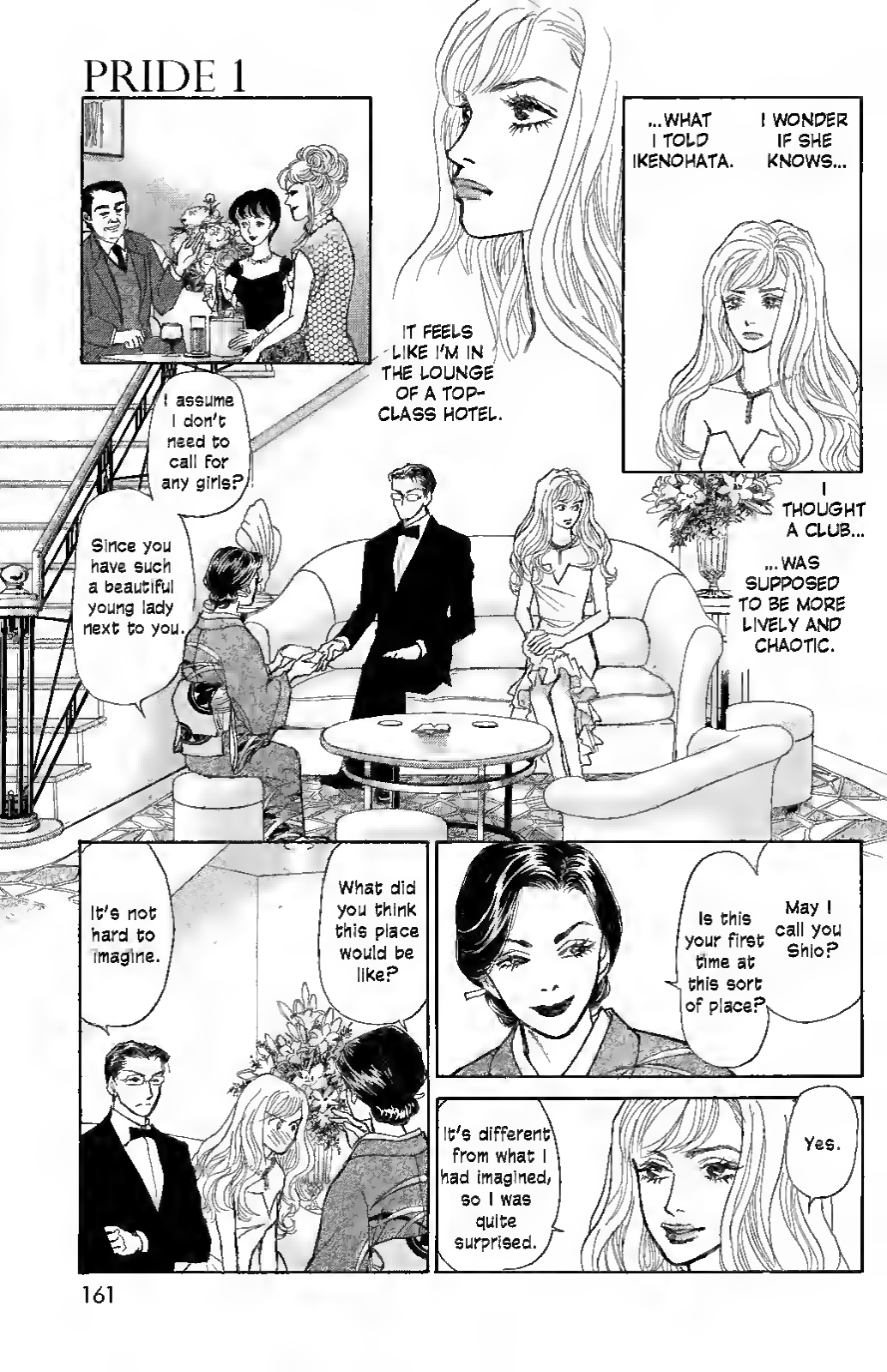

You, too.
Good work.
PHEW

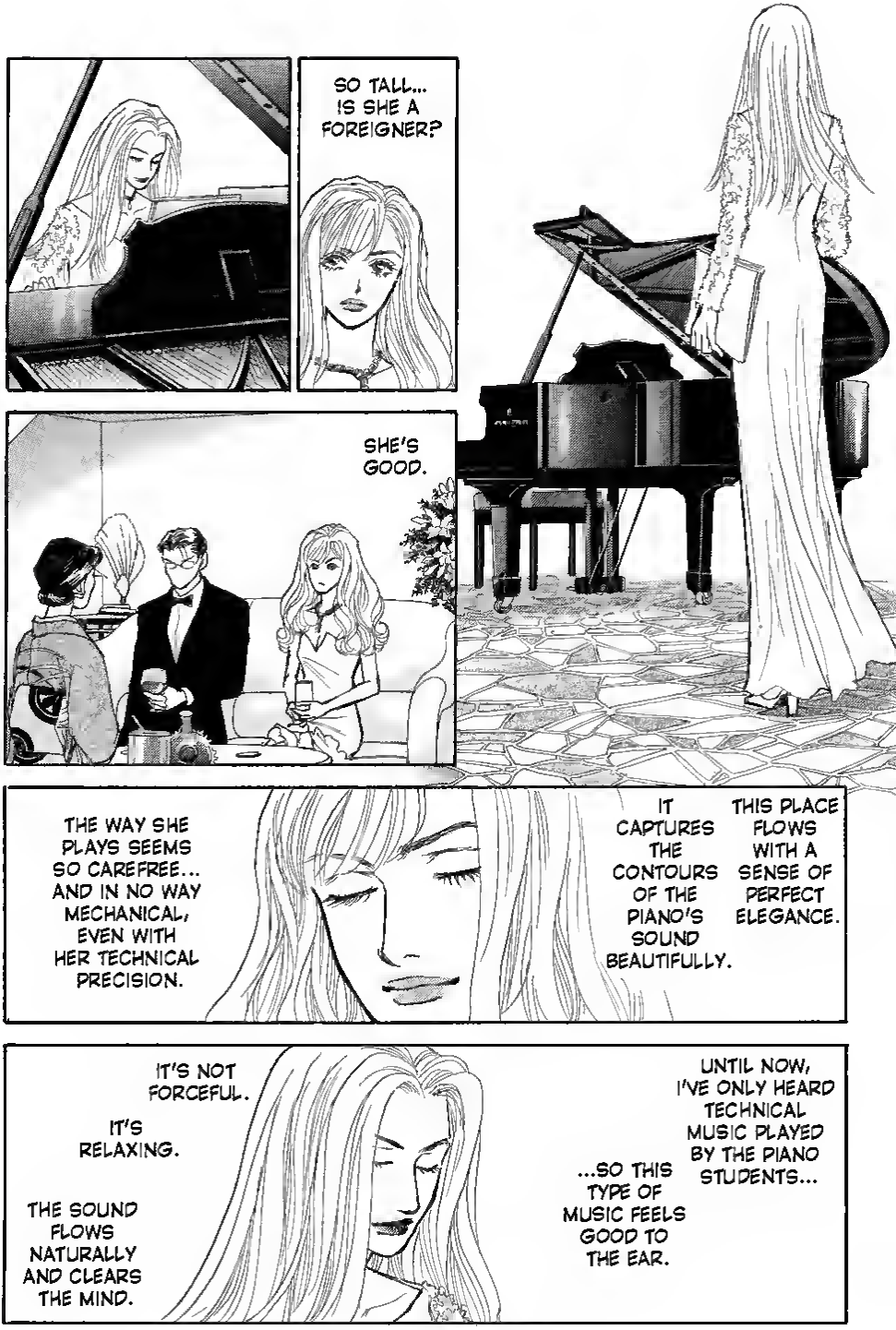

I was nervous at first...
...but it eventually felt the same as if I were on stage
How was your first job?
Both your Italian and your ability to read the atmosphere.
You were more splendid than I imagined you'd be

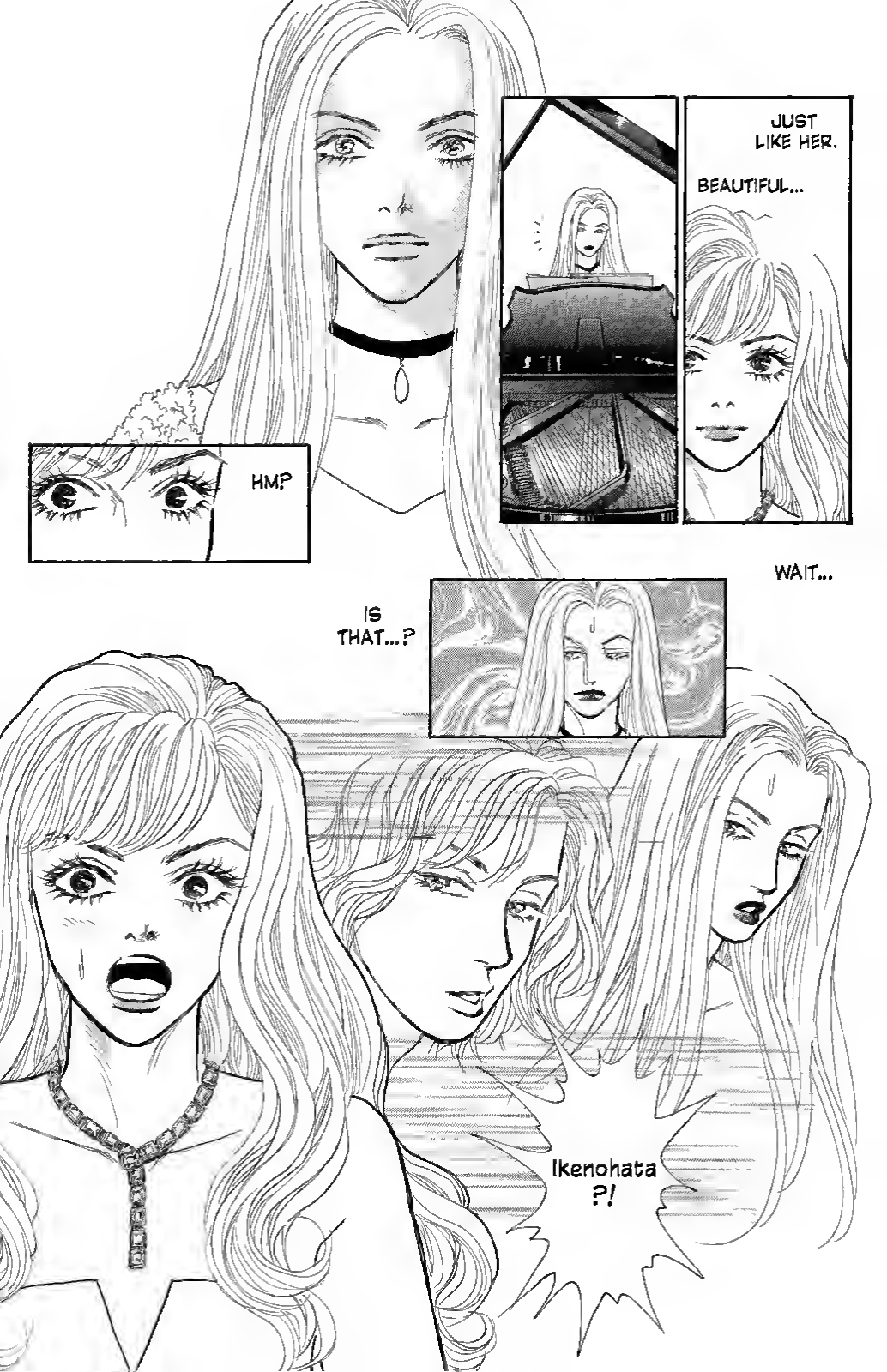
PRIDE 1

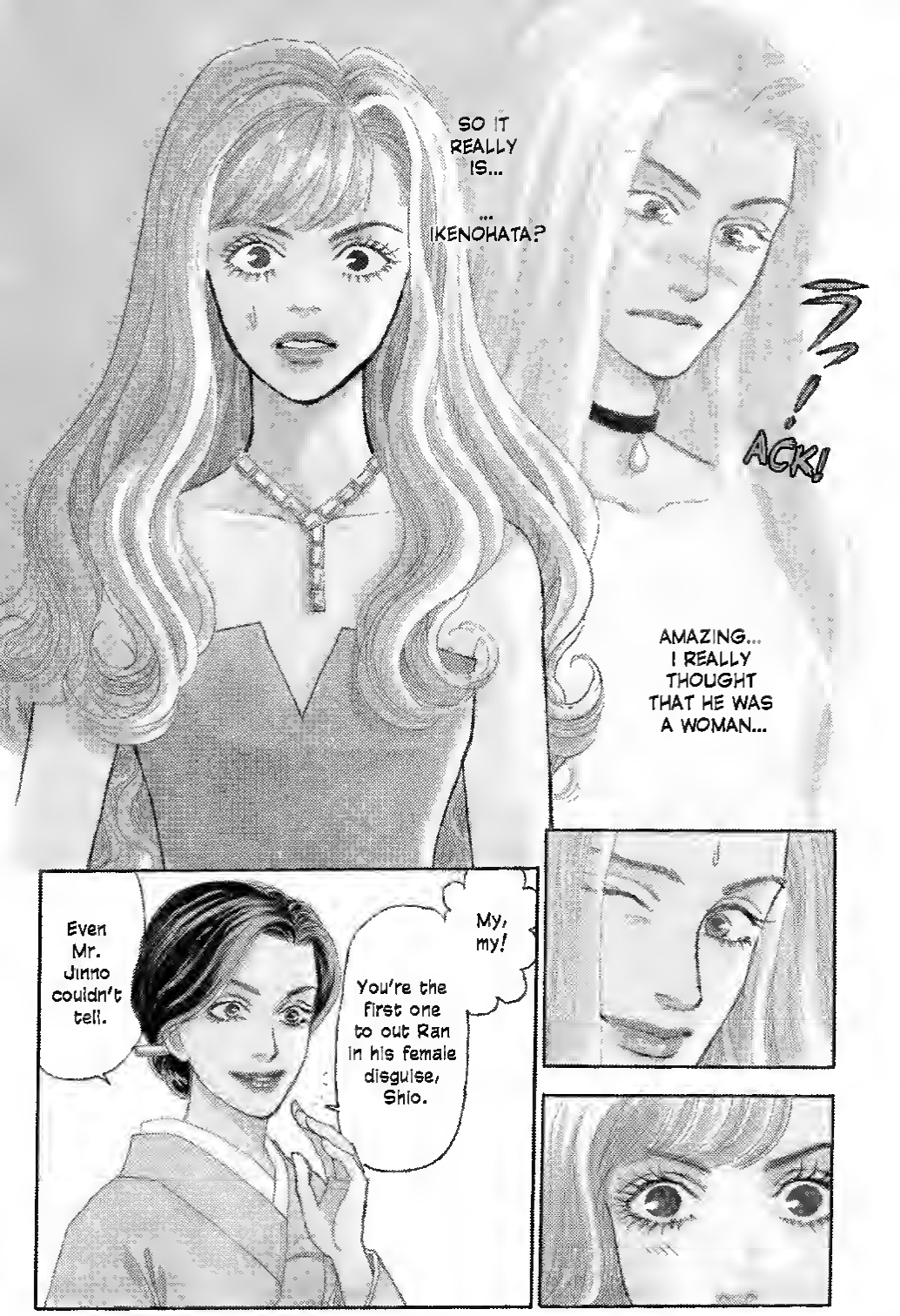
Do you think the character that you're playing...
...would like to go out for a drink?
So your role tonight was *Italian Translator Lady*?
That's good to hear.
HA HA
I DON'T LIKE HIS SENSE OF VALUES.
...so I think she would.
She's the type to trust someone to pick out her clothing for her...
Then she's the type I'd want to hire again.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN...
...THAT I HATE THIS MAN
A MAN WHO DETERMINES THE VALUE OF A PERSON...
...AS COOLLY AS A KNIFE.
A MAN WHO THINKS OF MARRIAGE AS A BUSINESS TRANSACTION...

This looks like a very high-class place.
With prices to match.
We rarely have young female customers.
I'm happy to hear that.
HO HO
Y-Yes... Of course ...
I wonder if you remember me. I'm Natsuko.
Would you call the mistress high-class, too?

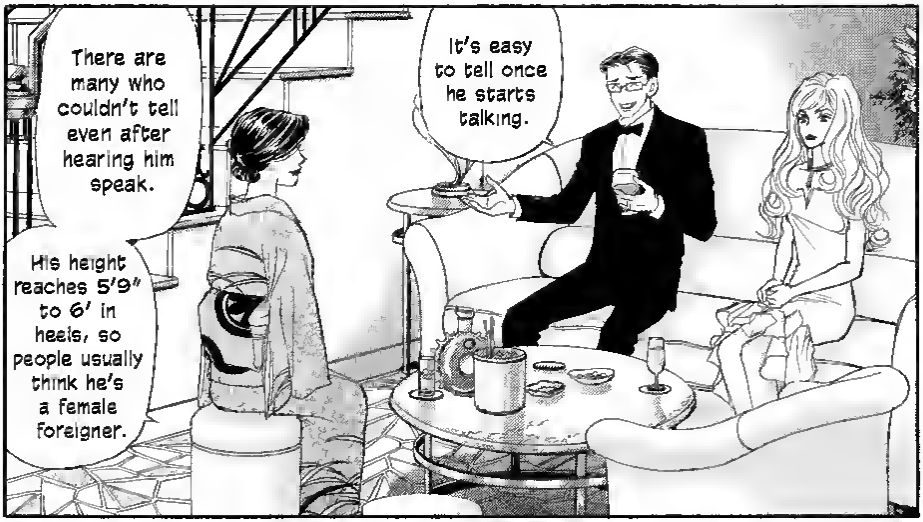

IT FEELS LIKE I'M IN THE LOUNGE OF A TOP-CLASS HOTEL.
I WONDER IF SHE KNOWS...
...WHAT I TOLD IKENOHATA.
I THOUGHT A CLUB...
...WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MORE LIVELY AND CHAOTIC.
I assume I don't need to call for any girls?
Since you have such a beautiful young lady next to you.
May I call you Shio?
Is this your first time at this sort of place?
What did you think this place would be like?
It's not hard to imagine.
Yes.
It's different from what I had imagined, so I was quite surprised.

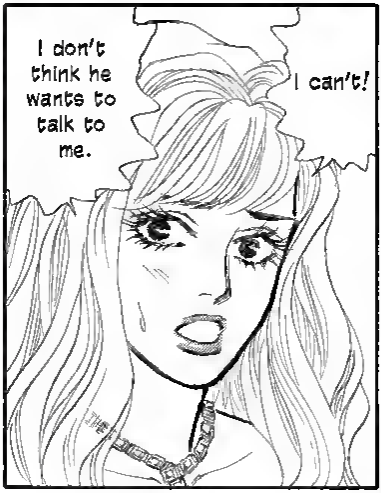

SO TALL... IS SHE A FOREIGNER?
SHE'S GOOD.
THE WAY SHE PLAYS SEEMS SO CAREFREE... AND IN NO WAY MECHANICAL, EVEN WITH HER TECHNICAL PRECISION.
IT CAPTURES THE CONTOURS OF THE PIANO'S SOUND BEAUTIFULLY.
THIS PLACE FLOWS WITH A SENSE OF PERFECT ELEGANCE.
IT'S NOT FORCEFUL.
IT'S RELAXING.
THE SOUND FLOWS NATURALLY AND CLEARS THE MIND.
...SO THIS TYPE OF MUSIC FEELS GOOD TO THE EAR.
UNTIL NOW, I'VE ONLY HEARD TECHNICAL MUSIC PLAYED BY THE PIANO STUDENTS...

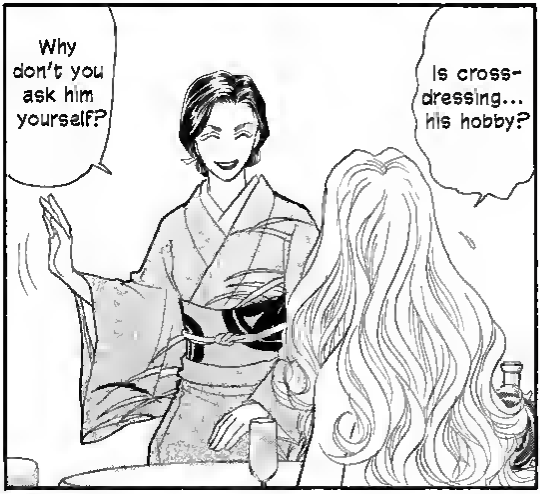

HM?
JUST LIKE HER.
BEAUTIFUL...
WAIT...
IS THAT...?
Ikenohata ?!

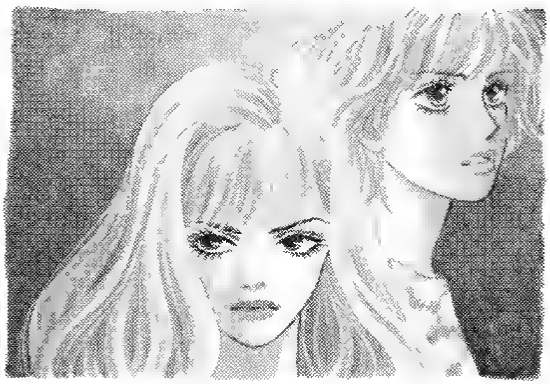

SO IT REALLY IS...
...IKENOHATA?
!?
ACK!
AMAZING... I REALLY THOUGHT THAT HE WAS A WOMAN...
Even Mr. Jinno couldn't tell.
My, my!
You're the first one to out Ran in his female disguise, Shio.

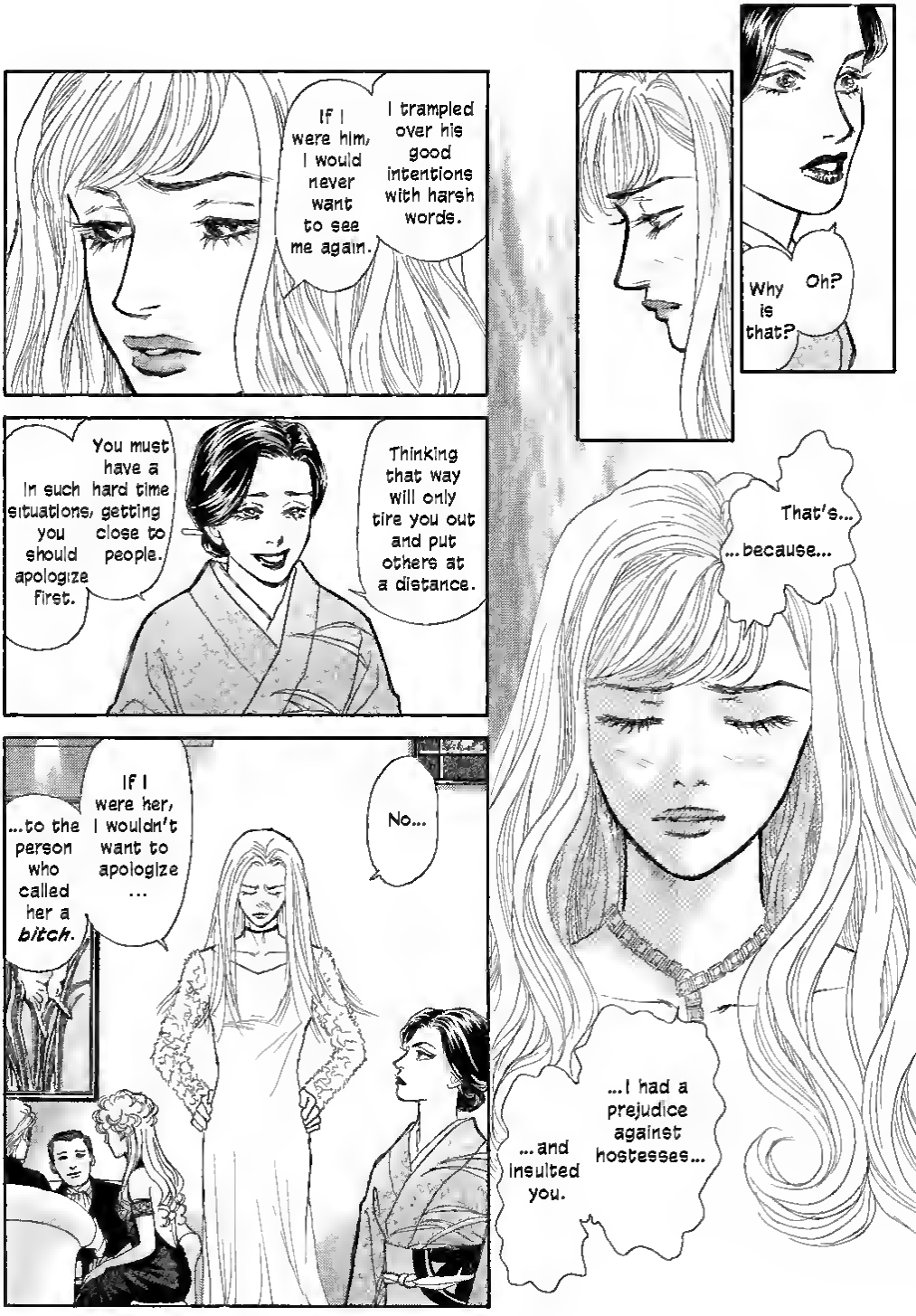
PRIDE 1

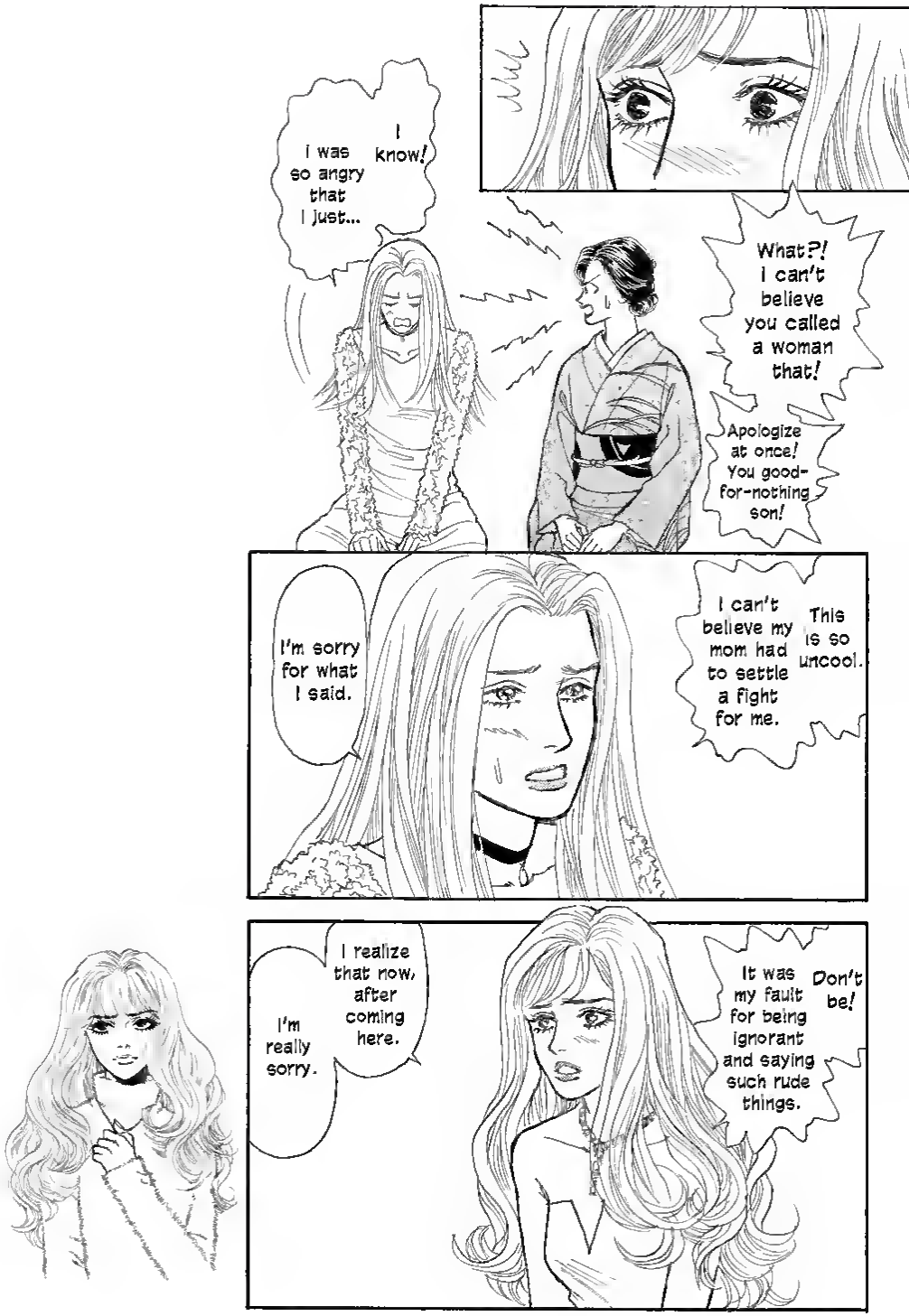

There are many who couldn't tell even after hearing him speak.
His height reaches 5'9" to 6' in heels, so people usually think he's a female foreigner.
It's easy to tell once he starts talking.


I don't think he wants to talk to me.
I can't!

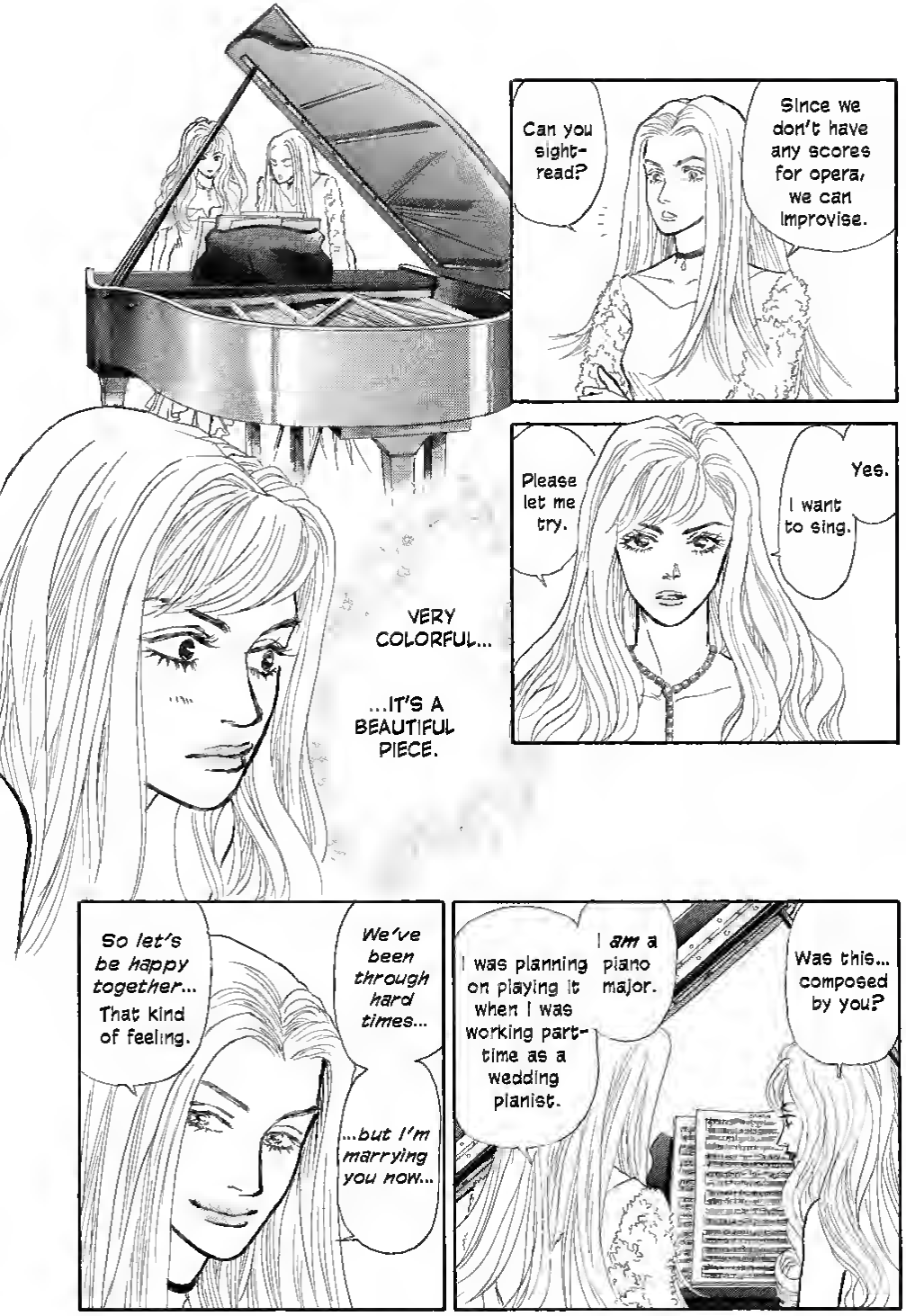

Why don't you ask him yourself?
Is cross-dressing... his hobby?




I trampled over his good intentions with harsh words.
If I were him, I would never want to see me again.
Oh?
Why is that?
That's...
...because...
...I had a prejudice against hostesses...
...and insulted you.
You must have a hard time getting close to people.
In such situations, you should apologize first.
Thinking that way will only tire you out and put others at a distance.
No...
If I were her, I wouldn't want to apologize ...
...to the person who called her a bitch.


I know!
I was so angry that I just...
What?! I can't believe you called a woman that!
Apologize at once! You good-for-nothing son!
I'm sorry for what I said.
I can't believe my mom had to settle a fight for me.
This is so uncool.
I realize that now, after coming here.
I'm really sorry.
Don't be!
It was my fault for being ignorant and saying such rude things.

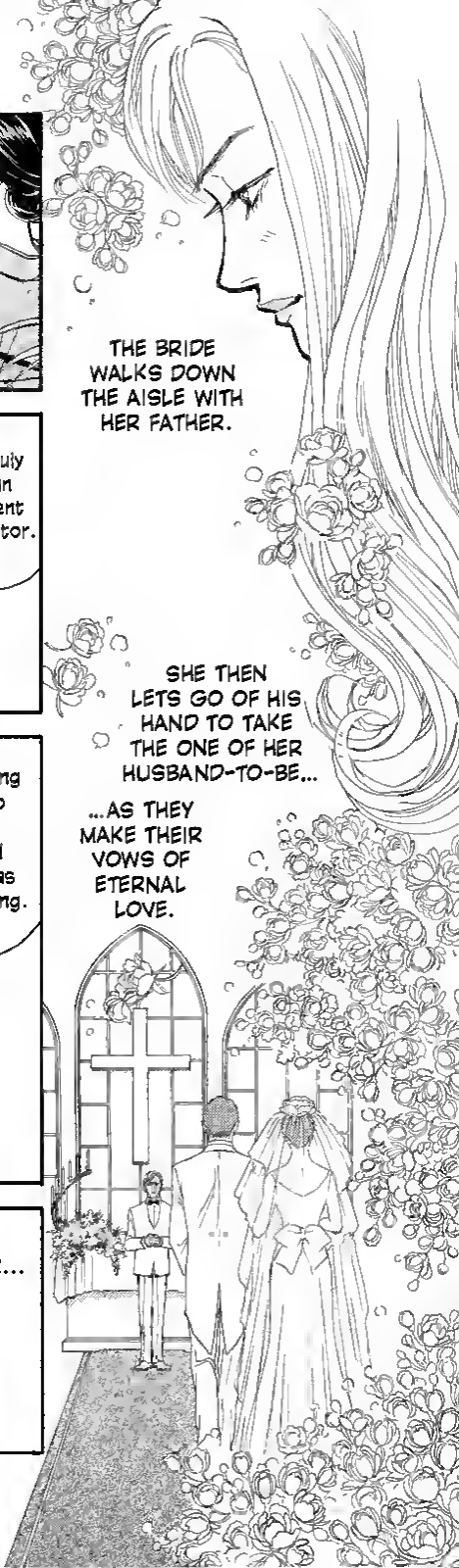
How about you sing a song as an apology?
I've been wanting to hear you sing again.
I'm sorry.
Now that I think about it, I *was* insulted.
Wait a minute...
Let's have a toast now that that's settled.
How about we have *Miss Model Student* here sing while we drink?
SHE WANTS ME TO SING HERE?
WHAT?
Though I suppose your singing is more suited for concert halls.
Sorry, but I can't play without the score.
I've been wanting to hear you sing opera, but this place isn't...


Can you sight-read?
Since we don't have any scores for opera, we can improvise.
Please let me try.
Yes. I want to sing.
VERY COLORFUL...
...IT'S A BEAUTIFUL PIECE.
Was this... composed by you?
I am a piano major.
I was planning on playing it when I was working part-time as a wedding pianist.
We've been through hard times...
...but I'm marrying you now...
So let's be happy together... That kind of feeling.

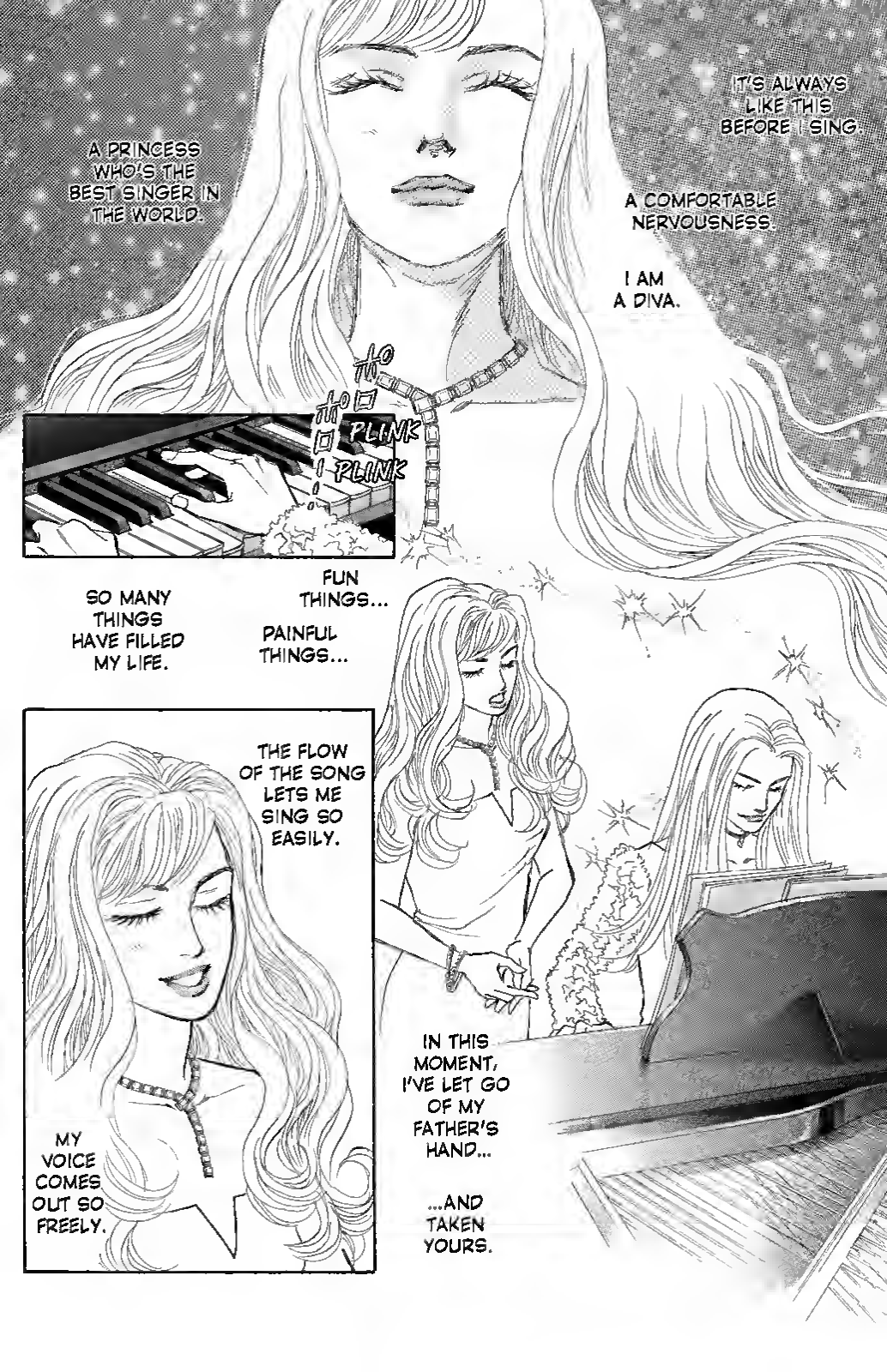
You truly are an excellent instigator.

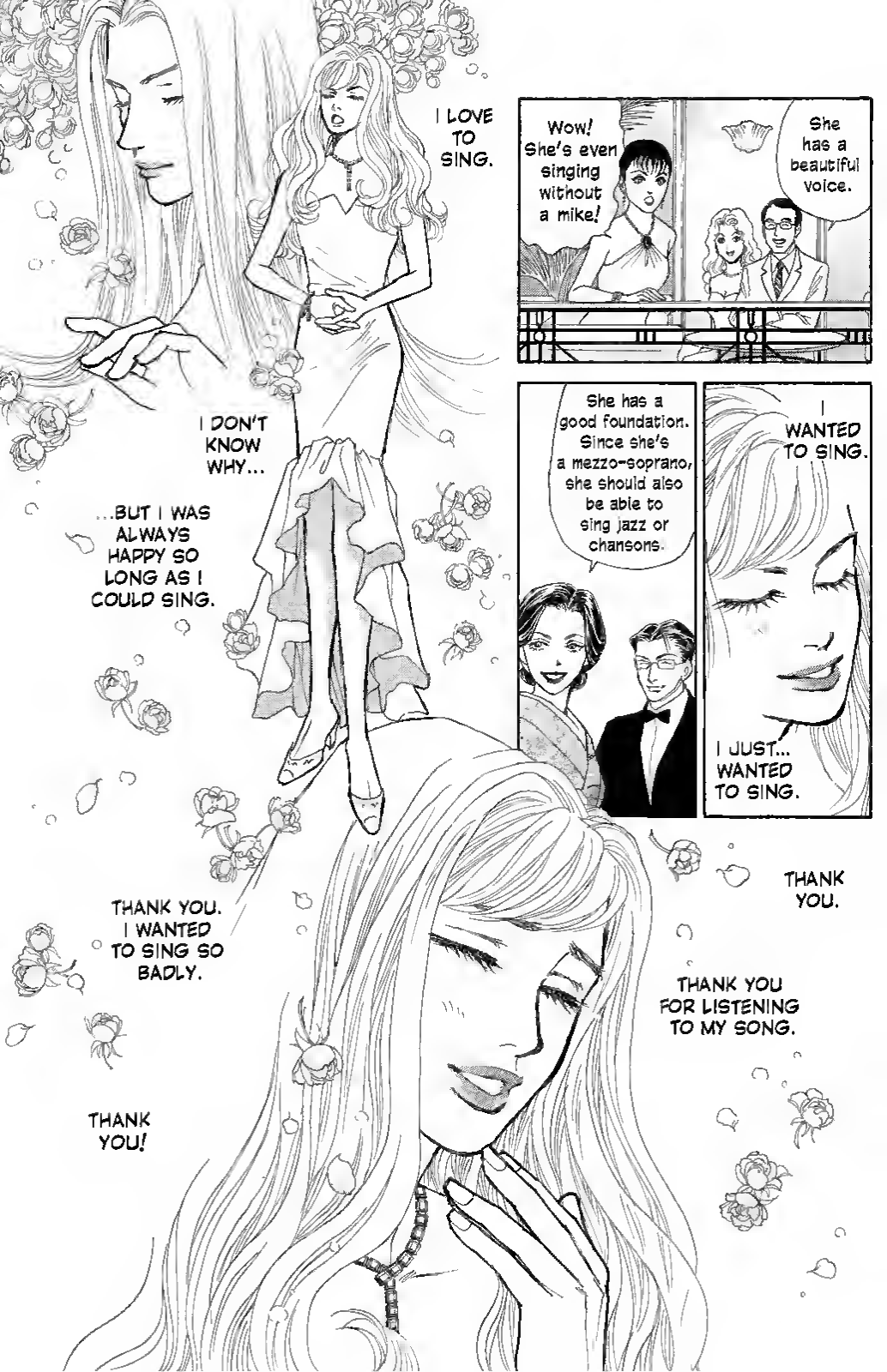
I thought I'd give her a little reward for doing a good job.
After hearing those two singers, it seemed like she was dying to sing.

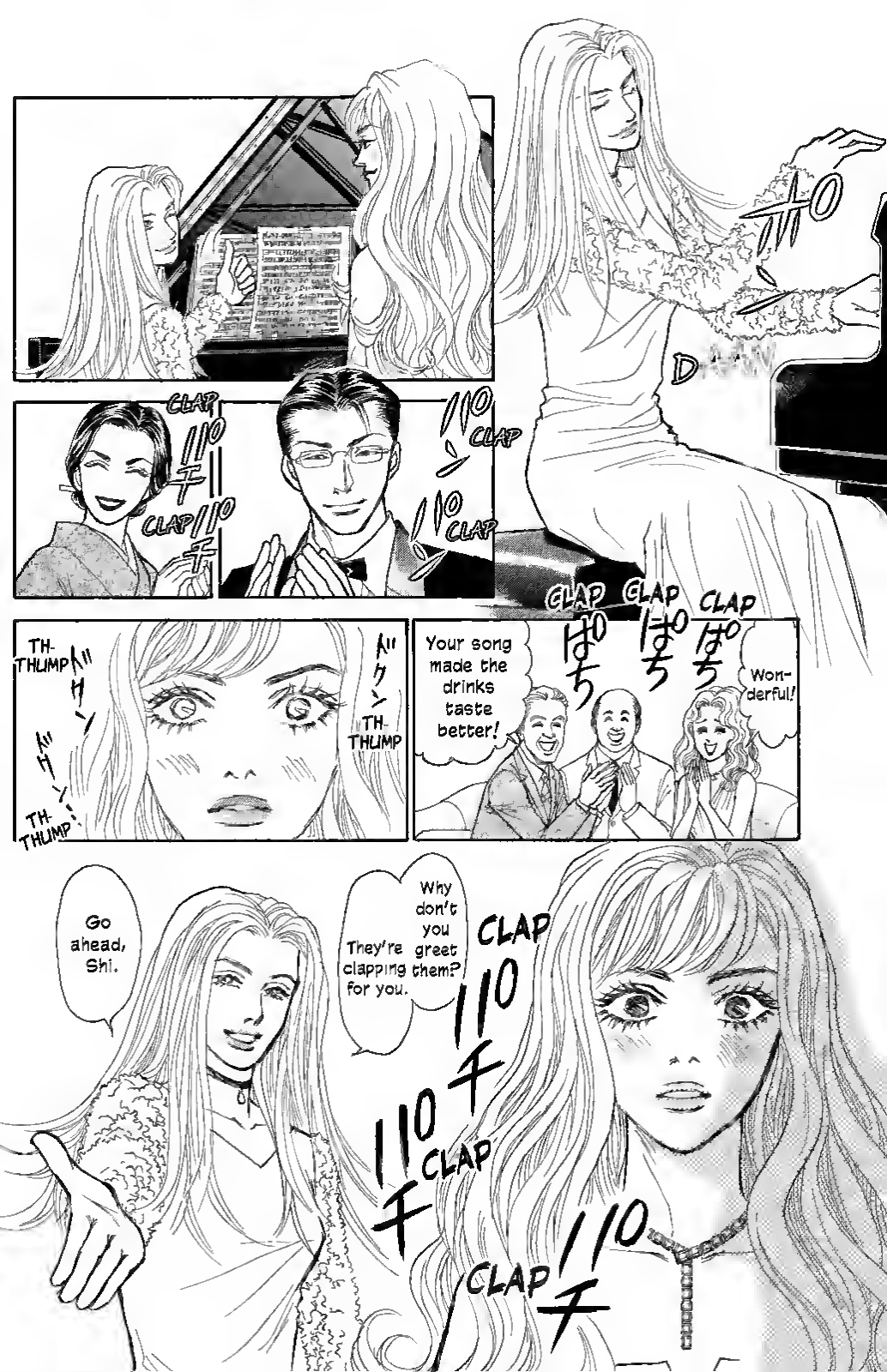
THIS IS A RARE SIGHT.
SO EVEN THIS MAN CAN MAKE SUCH A KIND GESTURE.
OH, DEAR...


THE BRIDE WALKS DOWN THE AISLE WITH HER FATHER.
SHE THEN LETS GO OF HIS HAND TO TAKE THE ONE OF HER HUSBAND-TO-BE...
...AS THEY MAKE THEIR VOWS OF ETERNAL LOVE.

Looks like someone's about to sing.
A customer?
Is something going on?
It's refreshing, after being constantly surrounded by greedy people.
It must be fun to play with a young lady with such pride.
Ohh... What beautiful women.
CLAP 110 CLAP 110
CLAP 110 CLAP 110
It's starting.
Yes.
I'M NERVOUS.
Nervous?
Looks like everyone's waiting for us.

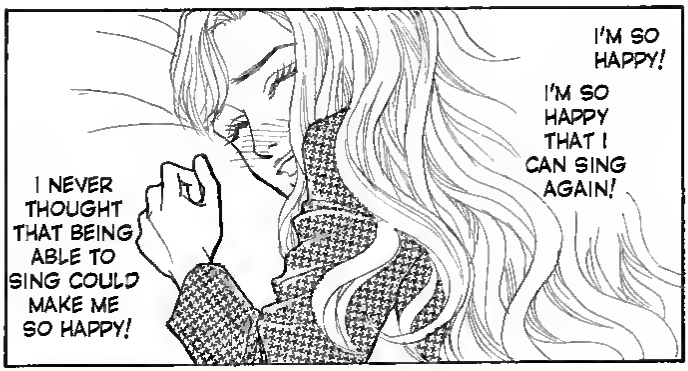

A PRINCESS WHO'S THE BEST SINGER IN THE WORLD.
IT'S ALWAYS LIKE THIS BEFORE I SING.
A COMFORTABLE NERVOUSNESS.
I AM A DIVA.
PLINK
PLINK
SO MANY THINGS HAVE FILLED MY LIFE.
FUN THINGS...
PAINFUL THINGS...
THE FLOW OF THE SONG LETS ME SING SO EASILY.
MY VOICE COMES OUT SO FREELY.
IN THIS MOMENT, I'VE LET GO OF MY FATHER'S HAND...
...AND TAKEN YOURS.

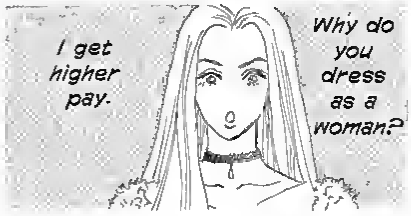

I LOVE TO SING.
I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...BUT I WAS ALWAYS HAPPY SO LONG AS I COULD SING.
THANK YOU. I WANTED TO SING SO BADLY.
THANK YOU!
Wow! She's even singing without a mike!
She has a beautiful voice.
She has a good foundation. Since she's a mezzo-soprano, she should also be able to sing jazz or chansons.
I WANTED TO SING.
I JUST... WANTED TO SING.
THANK YOU.
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO MY SONG.

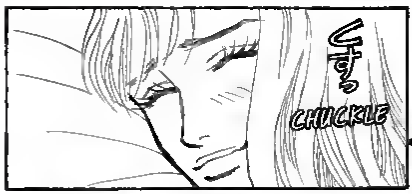

CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
Your song made the drinks taste better!
Wonderful!
Go ahead, Shi.
They're clapping for you.
Why don't you greet them?
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

How about a round of applause?!
CLAP
Then, let's do it together.
They're clapping for you, too.
WHOO
You've written a beautiful song, Ran.
Thank you. That was splendid!
CLAP
It's like we don't even exist.
They sure are easy on the eyes!
Our singer just got married, so I was planning on asking Mr. Jinno for a replacement.
You and Ran make a glamorous pair.
I was thinking...
Would you like to keep singing here, Shio?

I'll practice hard!
I can sing if I have the scores.
But you can't sing opera.
Instead, it'll be bossa nova, chansons, or jazz.
I'll lend you mine.
Yes, I would love to sing!
Please let me sing here!
I'll be counting on your help!
The pitches are different, so you'll need time to get used to it.
I'll also watch you practice.
FWUMP
I wanted to sing so much!
Thank you so much for bringing me here, Mr. Jinno!
Yes...
SHIO ASAMI
DID I...
...INADVERTENTLY CREATE A WAY FOR HER TO ESCAPE?


I'M SO HAPPY!
I'M SO HAPPY THAT I CAN SING AGAIN!
I NEVER THOUGHT THAT BEING ABLE TO SING COULD MAKE ME SO HAPPY!


I get higher pay.
Why do you dress as a woman?

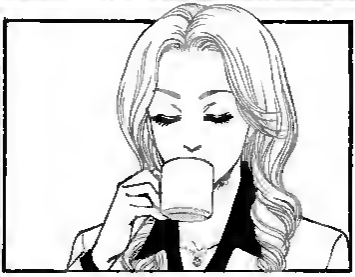

CHUCKLE

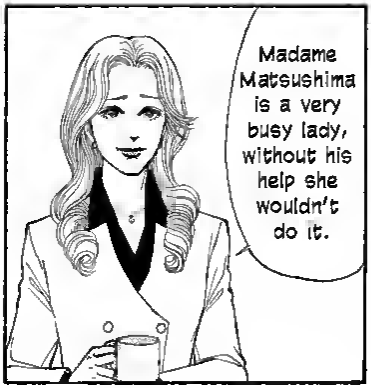
GOOD NIGHT, FATHER.
I'LL DEFINITELY VISIT YOU IN NEW ZEALAND SOMEDAY.

I CAN FINALLY WRITE A LETTER TO FATHER.
FATHER... I'M ABLE TO SING.
I'm doing fine here!
I'M SINGING SONGS FROM MANY GENRES.
ISN'T THAT AMAZING?! I'M ALSO LIVING WELL.

HOTEL
西急ホテル
NISHIKYUU

It's only once a week, but please free up some time.
I'll be taking classes from Madame Haruko Matsushima ?!




Madame Matsushima is a very busy lady, without his help she wouldn't do it.

It's... it's like a dream!
Mr. Jinno set this up for me?

I'M SO HAPPY.
I'M GLAD.
MR. JINNO IS STILL CONCERNED ABOUT ME.
Mr. Jinno said that there's no need to worry about the fee.
U-Um... About the lesson fee...
I...
Yes... I'll have to figure something out.
You'll need to find a place to live. You probably won't have much spare time if you have to work.
I'm afraid you can't stay in this hotel indefinitely.
What?
Mr. Jinno has informed me that you no longer have to work as his housekeeper.

Perhaps he finds your intrusion a nuisance.
B-But, I want to do it!
It's the least I can do to repay him!
BAM
The vice president is a busy person.
So we must respect his privacy.
I've said all that I came to say, so excuse me.
MORNING PLATE
¥9
AM 7:00~10:00

PRIDE 1

WILL I NEVER GET TO SEE HIM AGAIN?
WHAT DO I DO?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
HE LEFT ME TO HIS SECRETARY...
...AND HASN'T COME TO SEE ME.
HE'S A VERY BUSY MAN.
HE DOESN'T WANT ME AS A HOUSE-KEEPER.
SO I CAN'T JUST GO TO HIS OFFICE FOR NO REASON.
I NEED TO BECOME MORE MATURE.
SHOULD I WEAR MOM'S CLOTHES? NO. THEY'RE ALL GAUDY.
ELEGANCE IS BEYOND MY REACH, BUT I NEED MORE FEMININE CLOTHES.
I'M 21, BUT I STILL LOOK LIKE A CHILD.
I CAN'T LET THINGS STAY THIS WAY.

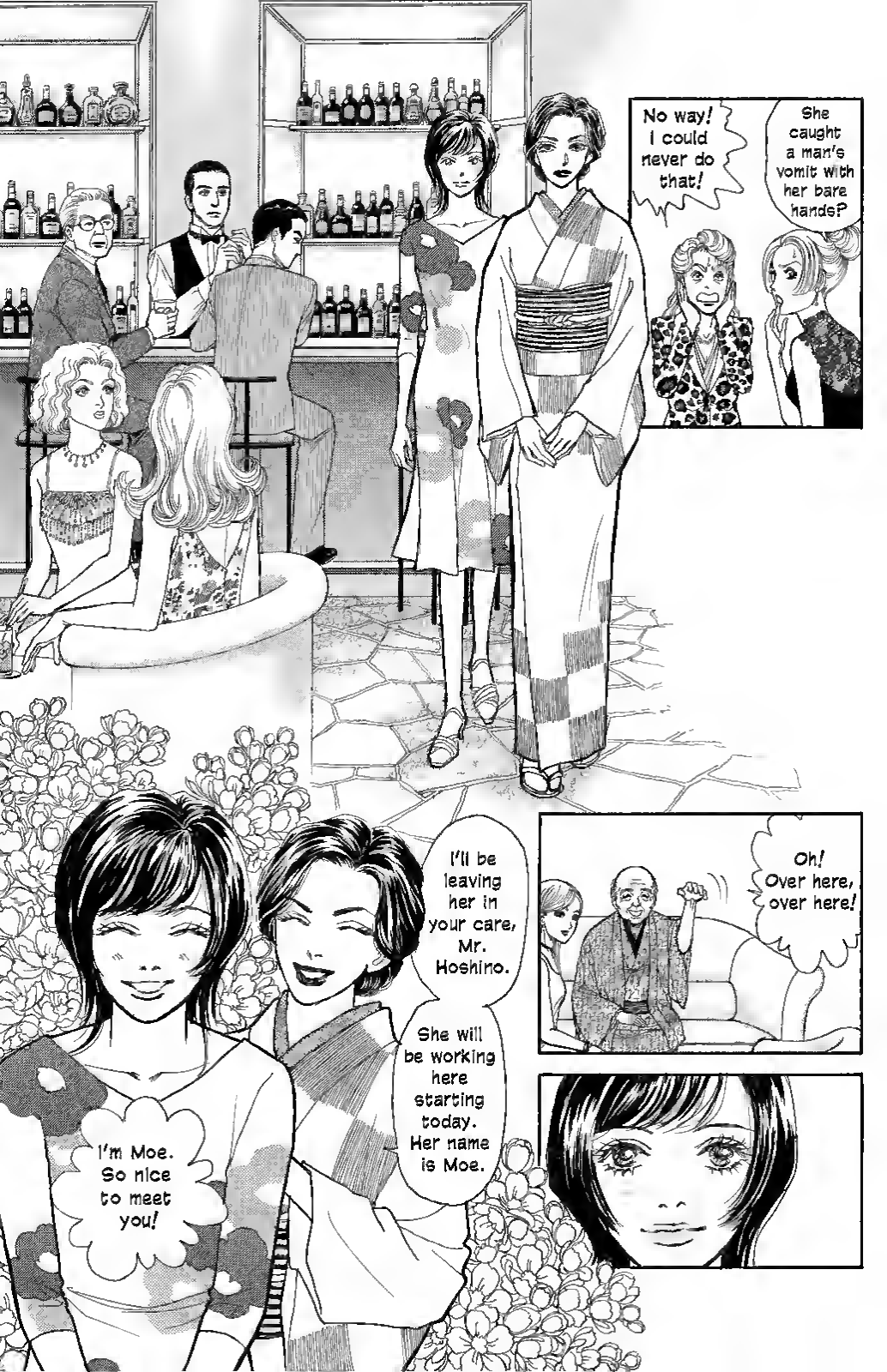
PRIMA DONNA
2F
2F
5F KORYUU
5F SERRA
4F PRIMA DONNA
3F PRIMA DONNA
B1 CLUB KIKUMI
DUO
NaNa
OH, MY... HER LOOK HAS...
CREAK
I'm sorry for disturbing you while you're at work...
...but I really wanted to speak with you in person.

Everyone here is so sophisticated and elegant.
I... I want to learn how to behave like a mature woman!
Please let me work here!
I can't continue to sing and work part-time jobs.
I'll fix whatever you want me to fix!
I'll make sure to dress in more beautiful clothes!
You want to work... ...as a hostess?
IS SHE CALLING MY PLACE A BAR ...?!
I used to work in a bar, so I know my way around.
If I can't work as a hostess, I can work in the kitchen.
Since I used to work at a cleaning company.
I'm also a pro at cleaning.
But my club is considered to be high-class in Ginza.
So you say ...

URK
I'll keep him company
It's nothing.
You should get some air...
WOBBLE
CREAK
Mr. Hoshino?
Are you all right?!
ICK!
HURRL!

Eww! She used her hands!
I'll bring you some lemon water.
I'm glad that your clothes didn't get soiled.
I...
...CAN USE THIS GIRL!

That old gentleman has asked for you.
KA-CHAK
!!?
LADY'S
If the CEO doesn't come, naturally his employees will stop coming, too.
He said that he was going to stop coming to our club since he's getting so old.
He is the CEO of Hoshino Pharmaceuticals, Gonzaburou Hoshino.
I used to work as a nurse for the neighborhood elderly.
Don't worry. I'm a pro at taking care of old men.
I'll hire you if you can convince him to keep coming.

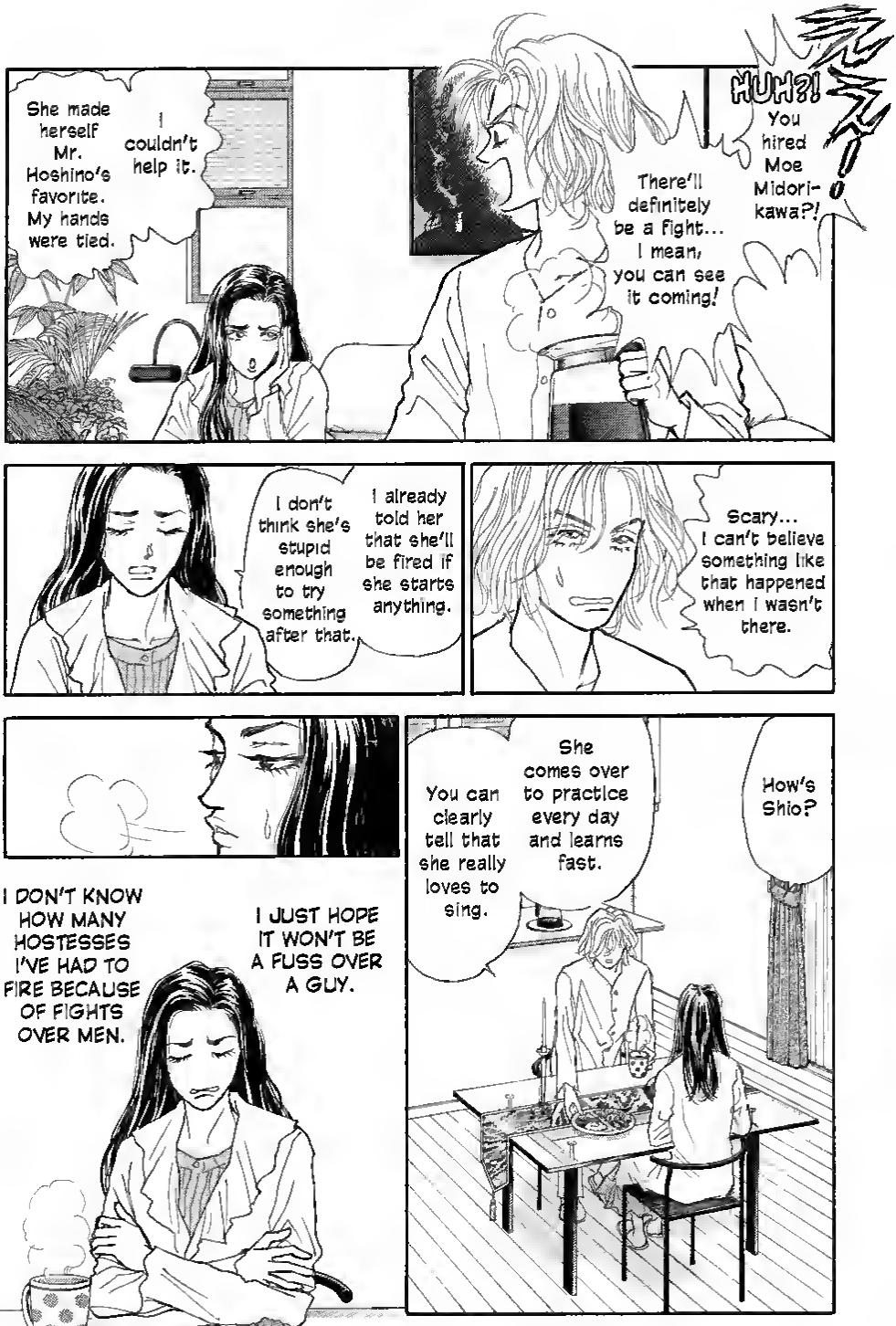

No way! I could never do that!
She caught a man's vomit with her bare hands?
Oh! Over here, over here!
I'll be leaving her in your care, Mr. Hoshino.
She will be working here starting today. Her name is Moe.
I'm Moe. So nice to meet you!

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
"SERRA
"PRIMA DONNA
"PRIMA DONNA
"SATOSHI
"CLUB KIKUMI
GINZA YANAGI BLD
Mr. Hoshino's car is over here!
Mr. Nagano! Mr. Nagano, your car is here!
Please come again, OK?!
Good night, take care!
PEACE
See you! ♡
M-Moe dear...! How can you use that tone to...?!
Please come again.
I'll be waiting! ♡
SWEAT SWEAT
It's fine, it's fine.
Moe is so cute...
I'll prepare kelp tea for you next time!
See you soon, Grandpa Hoshino! ♫
GAPE

Don't worry, Madame ...
I'll treat the other guests properly.
It's better to treat the elderly as if they were friends. It makes them happy.
HEH HEH
THIS CHILD... IS FRIGHTENING...
SHE SEEMS TO HAVE GONE THROUGH MANY HARDSHIPS, MAKING HER GOOD AT READING PEOPLE.
AND JUDGING FROM HER SHOCKING PERFORMANCE DURING THE COMPETITION, SHE'S THE TYPE WHO WILL DO ANYTHING TO REACH HER GOALS.
KEEPING HER CLOSE MAY PROVE TO BE DANGEROUS.
GINZA YANAGI BLD.

4F PRIMA DONNA
3F PRIMA DONNA
SATOSHI
CLUB KIKUMI
YANAGI B
Moe.
Let me tell you one thing, first.
Shio Asami has been hired to sing at our club.
Yes?
I know about what happened between you two.
I'm sorry to say that I don't approve of the trick you pulled at the competition.
CLUB KIKUMI
YANAGI BLD
So if anything like that happens again, I'll have to ask you to leave.
Please keep that in mind.

No.
It was my own decision.
Did Mr. Jinno recommend her to you?
I understand. I'll be careful not to do something like that again.
That time, I was driven into a corner and was forced to take desperate measures.
AGAIN WITH SHIO ASAMI!
WHY IS SHE ALWAYS A STEP AHEAD OF ME?!
I WANT...
...TO KILL HER...


She made herself Mr. Hoshino's favorite. My hands were tied.
I couldn't help it.
There'll definitely be a fight... I mean, you can see it coming!
HUH?! You hired Moe Midorikawa?!
I don't think she's stupid enough to try something after that.
I already told her that she'll be fired if she starts anything.
Scary... I can't believe something like that happened when I wasn't there.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY HOSTESSES I'VE HAD TO FIRE BECAUSE OF FIGHTS OVER MEN.
I JUST HOPE IT WON'T BE A FUSS OVER A GUY.
You can clearly tell that she really loves to sing.
She comes over to practice every day and learns fast.
How's Shio?

A WOMAN CORNERED INTO DOING ANYTHING TO ATTAIN HER GOALS...

...AND A WOMAN CRIPPLED BY HER PRIDE.

I NEVER IMAGINED THAT THESE TWO WOMEN WOULD WORK IN MY CLUB.

THESE TWO WOMEN, FROM COMPLETELY OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE SPECTRUM... I WONDER WHAT THEIR LIVES WILL BE LIKE FROM NOW ON.

I WENT TO SEE LA TRAVIATA IN FEBRUARY.

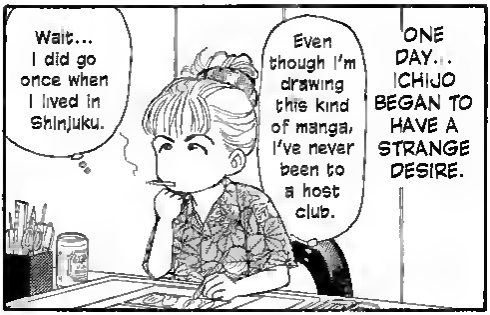
SINCE THEN, ONLY TWO MONTHS HAVE PASSED.

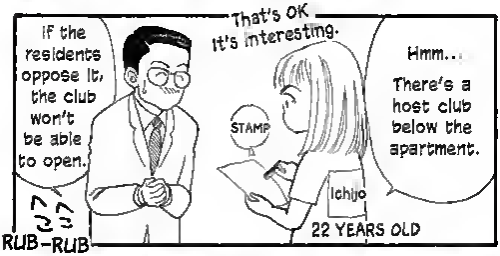
PRIDE 1 END

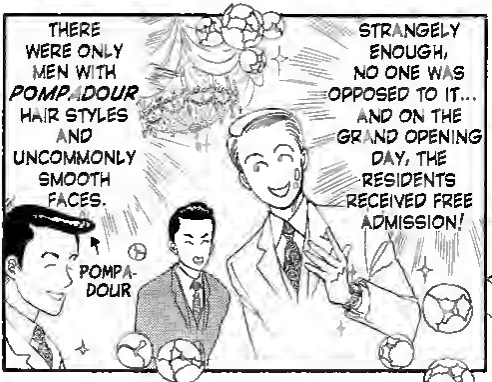
APPEARED IN ISSUES OF *CHORUS* FEBRUARY TO JULY 2003

GETTING THE RIGHT LOVE ADVICE
PRACTICE REPORT

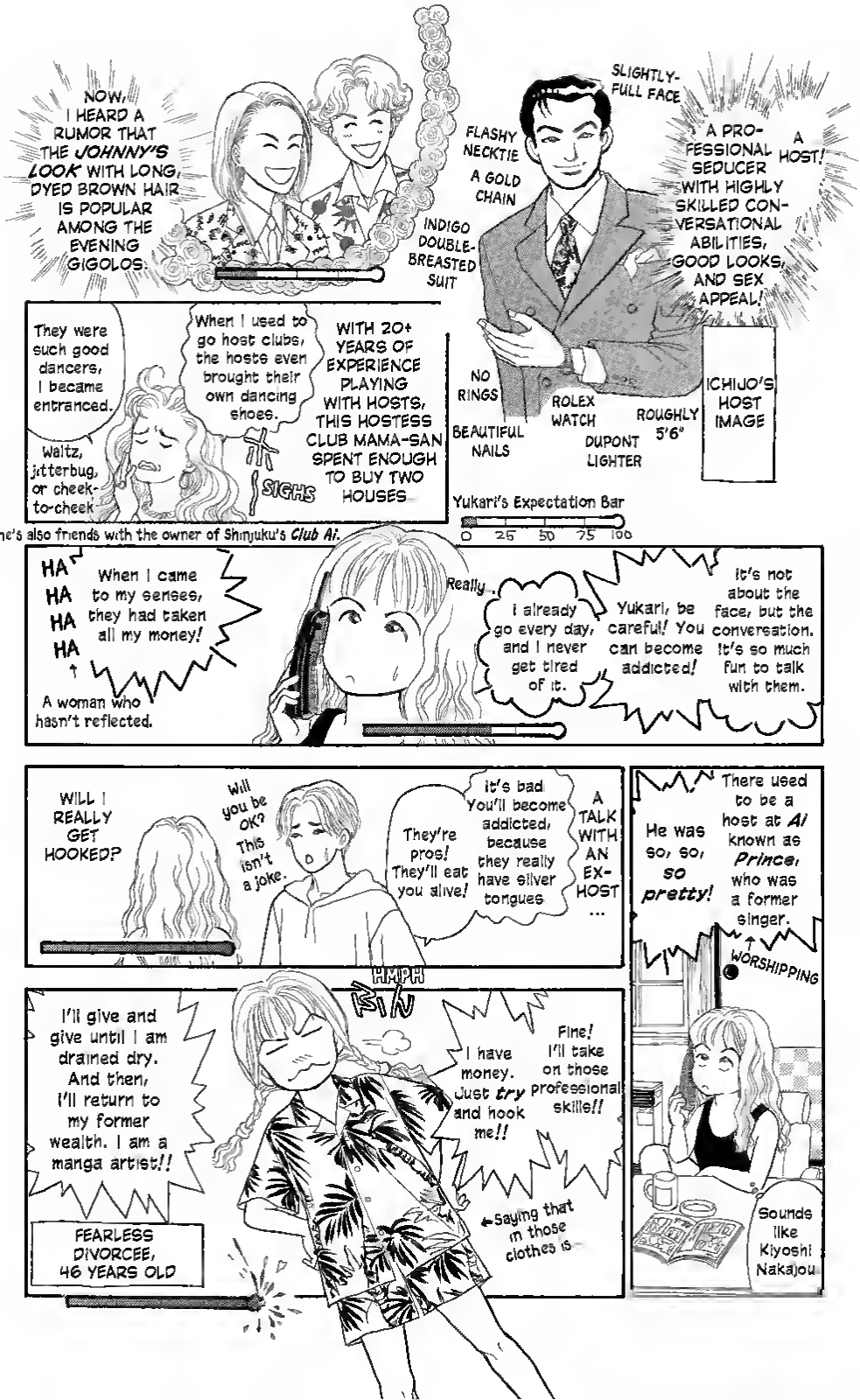
HOW MANY LOVERS CAN YOU GET?

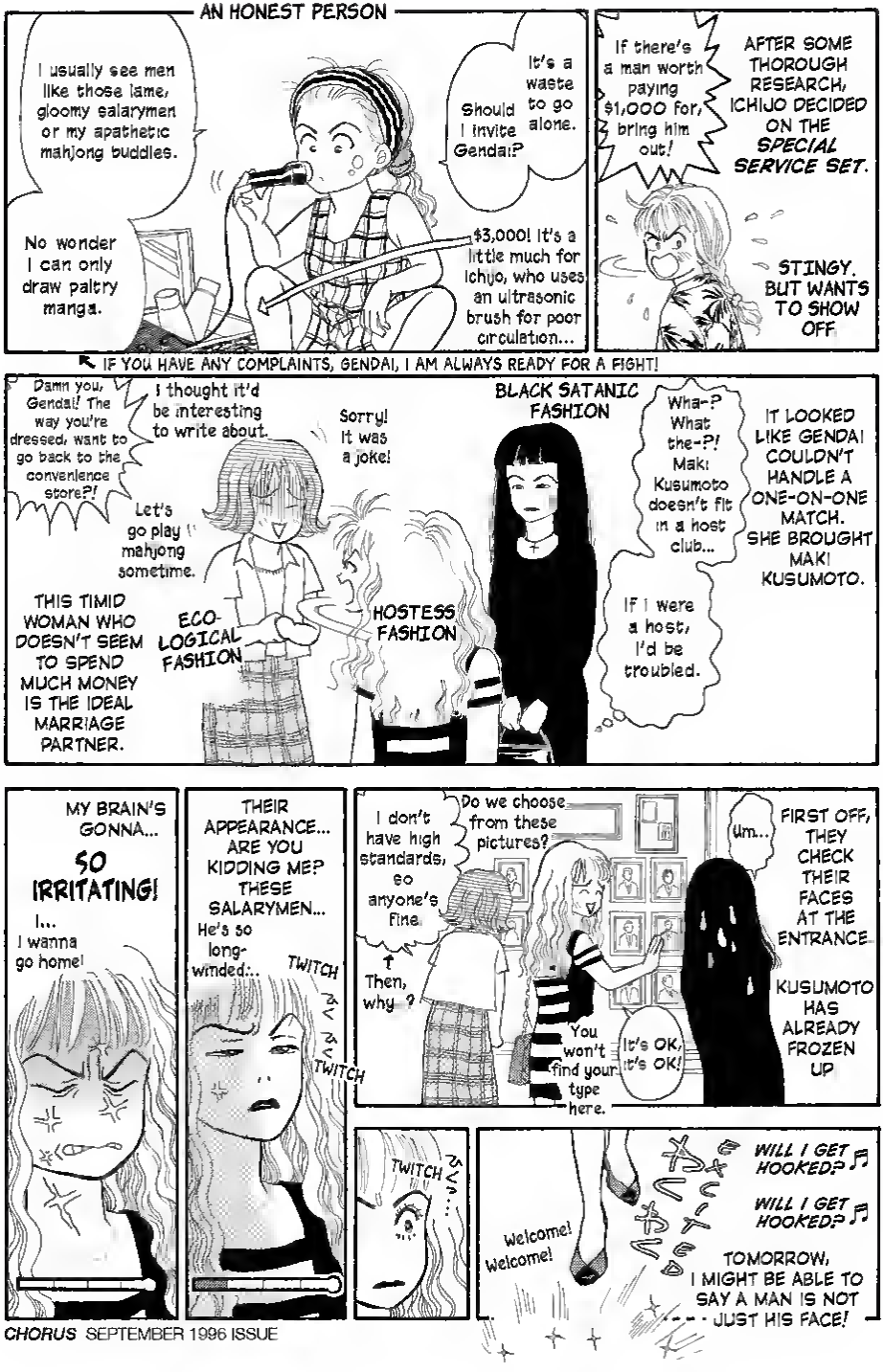

Wait... I did go once when I lived in Shinjuku.
Even though I'm drawing this kind of manga, I've never been to a host club.
ONE DAY... ICHIJO BEGAN TO HAVE A STRANGE DESIRE.

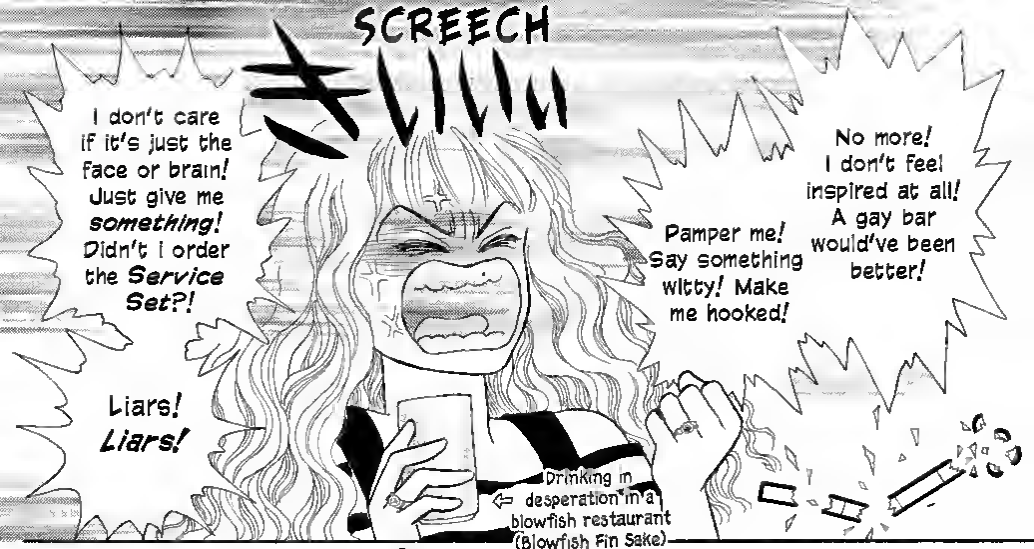

If the residents oppose it, the club won't be able to open.
That's OK It's interesting.
STAMP
Hmm... There's a host club below the apartment.
Ichijo
22 YEARS OLD
RUB-RUB


THERE WERE ONLY MEN WITH POMPADOUR HAIR STYLES AND UNCOMMONLY SMOOTH FACES.
POMPA-DOUR
STRANGELY ENOUGH, NO ONE WAS OPPOSED TO IT... AND ON THE GRAND OPENING DAY, THE RESIDENTS RECEIVED FREE ADMISSION!

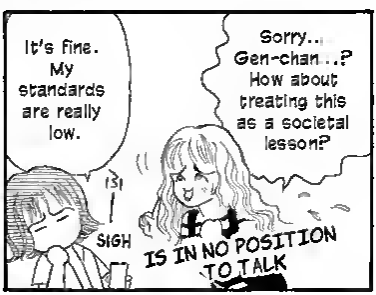
Even Carl Smoky Ishii was a host!
But that was then, and this is now!
HOW ARE HOST CLUBS FUN?!
WHY...? WHY DO PEOPLE BUY THESE GUYS CARS, WATCHES, AND SUITS?!
WHY?!
Are they car salesmen?
They look like the band, Tokyo Romantica
I LOVE ROCKER DUDES


NOW, I HEARD A RUMOR THAT THE JOHNNY'S LOOK WITH LONG, DYED BROWN HAIR IS POPULAR AMONG THE EVENING GIGOLOS.
SLIGHTLY-FULL FACE
FLASHY NECKTIE
A GOLD CHAIN
INDIGO DOUBLE-BREASTED SUIT
A HOST!
A PROFESSIONAL SEDUCER WITH HIGHLY SKILLED CONVERSATIONAL ABILITIES, GOOD LOOKS, AND SEX APPEAL!
NO RINGS
BEAUTIFUL NAILS
ROLEX WATCH
DUPONT LIGHTER
ROUGHLY 5'6"
ICHIJO'S HOST IMAGE
They were such good dancers, I became entranced.
When I used to go host clubs, the hosts even brought their own dancing shoes.
WITH 20+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE PLAYING WITH HOSTS, THIS HOSTESS CLUB MAMA-SAN SPENT ENOUGH TO BUY TWO HOUSES
Waltz, jitterbug, or cheek-to-cheek
SIGHS
She's also friends with the owner of Shinjuku's Club Ai.
Yukari's Expectation Bar
0 25 50 75 100
HA HA HA HA
When I came to my senses, they had taken all my money!
A woman who hasn't reflected.
Really...
I already go every day, and I never get tired of it.
Yukari, be careful! You can become addicted!
It's not about the face, but the conversation. It's so much fun to talk with them.
WILL I REALLY GET HOOKED?
Will you be OK? This isn't a joke.
They're pros! They'll eat you alive!
It's bad You'll become addicted, because they really have silver tongues
A TALK WITH AN EX-HOST ...
He was so, so, so pretty!
There used to be a host at Ai known as Prince, who was a former singer.
WORSHIPPING
Sounds like Kiyoshi Nakajou
I'll give and give until I am drained dry. And then, I'll return to my former wealth. I am a manga artist!!
FEARLESS DIVORCEE, 46 YEARS OLD
HMPH
I have money. Just try and hook me!!
Fine! I'll take on those professional skills!!
Saying that in those clothes is


AN HONEST PERSON
I usually see men like those lame, gloomy salarymen or my apathetic mahjong buddies.
No wonder I can only draw paltry manga.
Should I invite Gendai?
It's a waste to go alone.
$3,000! It's a little much for Ichijo, who uses an ultrasonic brush for poor circulation...
If there's a man worth paying $1,000 for, bring him out!
AFTER SOME THOROUGH RESEARCH, ICHIJO DECIDED ON THE SPECIAL SERVICE SET.
STINGY, BUT WANTS TO SHOW OFF.
IF YOU HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS, GENDAI, I AM ALWAYS READY FOR A FIGHT!
Damn you, Gendai! The way you're dressed, want to go back to the convenience store?!
I thought it'd be interesting to write about.
Sorry! It was a joke!
Let's go play mahjong sometime.
THIS TIMID WOMAN WHO DOESN'T SEEM TO SPEND MUCH MONEY IS THE IDEAL MARRIAGE PARTNER.
ECO-LOGICAL FASHION
HOSTESS FASHION
BLACK SATANIC FASHION
Wha-? What the-?! Maki Kusumoto doesn't fit in a host club...
IF I were a host, I'd be troubled.
IT LOOKED LIKE GENDAI COULDN'T HANDLE A ONE-ON-ONE MATCH. SHE BROUGHT MAKI KUSUMOTO.
MY BRAIN'S GONNA... SO IRRITATING!
I... I wanna go home!
THEIR APPEARANCE... ARE YOU KIDDING ME? THESE SALARYMEN...
He's so long-winded:..
TWITCH
TWITCH
I don't have high standards, so anyone's fine.
Then, why ?
Do we choose from these pictures?
You won't find your type here.
It's OK, it's OK!
Um...
FIRST OFF, THEY CHECK THEIR FACES AT THE ENTRANCE.
KUSUMOTO HAS ALREADY FROZEN UP
TWITCH
Welcome! Welcome!
WILL I GET HOOKED?
WILL I GET HOOKED?
TOMORROW, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SAY A MAN IS NOT JUST HIS FACE!


SCREECH
I don't care if it's just the face or brain! Just give me *something*! Didn't I order the *Service Set*?!
Liars! *Liars!*
Pamper me! Say something witty! Make me hooked!
No more! I don't feel inspired at all! A gay bar would've been better!
⇦ Drinking in desperation in a blowfish restaurant (Blowfish Fin Sake)

I'm sure you'll be a hit with these plain, conservative guys, Gen-chan!
SLAP
Now I realize this isn't my cup of tea. I'll leave the script to you! Thanks!
Can't depend on this girl ⇨
HUH?
HUH?!
Editor


It's fine. My standards are really low.
Sorry... Gen-chan...? How about treating this as a societal lesson?
SIGH
IS IN NO POSITION TO TALK

AN APOLOGY:

DUE TO A SUDDEN ILLNESS THE HOST CLUB INFILTRATION REPORT WILL BE DONE BY MS. ICHIJO'S FRIEND, GENDAI.

CHORUS
EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

HO HO HO
You look happy!
You want to draw, right? *Right?!* I'm kind, so I'll give you material for free!
I-I want to draw...
I also have my own work to do...

REQUIREMENTS TO PASS THE INTERVIEW TO BE A HOST:
1. CAN WORK EVERY DAY
2. LIVES NEARBY

I DON'T THINK THIS IS A JOKE!!

—THE END—

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO READ THE CONTINUATION OF THIS REPORT, PLEASE READ THE YYC WIDE VERSION OF YOUKO GENDAI'S ***HOW MANY FRIENDS CAN YOU LOSE?***

コーラス
QUEEN'S COMICS

プライド 1

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